



# KASHMIR

EXPOSING THE MYTH  
BEHIND THE NARRATIVE

KHALID BASHIR AHMAD



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For the people of Kashmir



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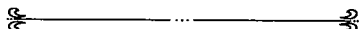
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# Contents

|                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | ix   |
| <i>Prologue</i>         | xiii |
| 1. Aborigines           | 1    |
| 2. Mind's Eye           | 16   |
| 3. Malice               | 31   |
| 4. Power                | 54   |
| 5. Blood                | 95   |
| 6. Agitation            | 167  |
| 7. Migration            | 225  |
| 8. Homeland             | 283  |
| 9. Media                | 319  |
| <i>Epilogue</i>         | 341  |
| <i>Glossary</i>         | 359  |
| <i>Bibliography</i>     | 366  |
| <i>Index</i>            | 375  |
| <i>About the Author</i> | 388  |





# Acknowledgements

The transformation of Kashmir from a Hindu to a Muslim society during the 14th–15th century AD gave birth to a narrative according to which the Muslim rulers forcibly converted and evicted Hindus from Kashmir and destroyed their religious icons. A minuscule minority of Brahmans, who did not change their faith, based this narrative almost entirely on the observations of a chronicler, Jonaraja, who lived during the early years of Islam in Kashmir and was not at ease with it. The narrative became the hallmark of the Brahman discourse on medieval Kashmir which looks at the five centuries of Muslim rule only as a period of persecution.

Through medieval Kashmir, the narrative made its way to the present times, and in the course, new elements were added to it. Following the eruption of armed insurgency in Kashmir and mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, this community narrative got spiced up with additional tales, acting as the foreword of the existing debate on Kashmir. Broadly, the narrative is about the Kashmiri Pandits being the inheritors of a 5,000-year-long history and the only aborigines of Kashmir who were repeatedly persecuted by Muslim rulers and compatriots, forcibly converted to Islam—their temples were destroyed too—and repeatedly chased away from Kashmir, for the latest time in 1990.

*Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative* attempts to blow away the fog over the realities of Kashmir and questions the ‘facts’ that have traditionally populated the mythology of the existing narrative. It analyses the Kashmiri Pandit community narrative in the light of historical material and digs out many fallacies by cross-referencing, as is done in widely accepted practices of historiography. The research for the book pits opposite interpretations of same events which have

been twisted out of context against what they actually were about. It dissects the stereotype created by historians and others, who have hammered in ahistorical perceptions over a long period of time, by providing suitable representations of some facts and myths through a dispassionate contextual reading of them. Due care has been taken to glean facts from authentic sources and sufficiently reference the arguments. This work is supported by over one thousand references. The objective is to tell fact from fiction and look at events as they occurred, rather than as they have been told. The historical facts discussed here have been overlooked or kept under wraps for a very long time to perpetuate a suitable community narrative.

The scope of the book extends from prehistoric Kashmir right to the present times; this has been achieved by using available Palaeolithic evidence as well as ancient texts. For the contemporary period, this work also relies on interviews of witnesses and an extensive archive of journalistic writing and reportage. The main theme consistently running through the chapters of this book is an attempt to interrogate a historiography that has gone almost unchallenged, and to similarly interrogate the exiting Pandit community narrative, how it has been perpetuated, and to explore contradictions and their sources within that narrative.

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# Prologue

Situated between the Greater Himalayas and the Pir Panjal mountain range in the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent, Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim-inhabited land. It is a lush valley and a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir which, in international jargon, is still referred to as Kashmir to denote the entire territory. The seat of power of the Dogra rulers till 1947 was known as the *Kashmir Darbar*, giving an idea about the whole princely state. In this work, however, Kashmir has been used to refer to the Valley of Kashmir—a distinct cultural and geographical entity with its people speaking an ancient language. The land, whose beauty has found elaborate mention in many a work of prose and verse, is known today more for the dispute over it, arising out of the Partition in 1947 between India and Pakistan. India administers the Himalayan valley and claims the territory as its integral part, while Pakistan describes it as its jugular vein without which the country would be incomplete. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the dispute was debated several times at the United Nations, and the world body asked for a plebiscite to decide the rival claims by the two countries. This, however, was not to happen. The two South Asian nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars for the ownership of Kashmir, besides coming close to a nuclear conflagration in the recent past, and have held series of unsuccessful bilateral negotiations to address the issue.

Historically, Kashmir has seen three major religions gaining ascendancy in this tiny country. It is a tale of conflict and confluence among Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. According to a popular mythological account, the earliest people of the land are known as the *Nagas* or the snake worshippers. Buddhism achieved pre-eminence and remained the reigning religion of Kashmir for over a millennium until it was obliterated by militant Hinduism. Subsequently,

Hinduism dominated the scene through its indigenous form *Shaivism*. However, by the 12th century AD, it was on decline due to rampant corrupt practices by its followers. By then, Islamic influence had made inroads into the otherwise landlocked country. Muslim adventurers had trickled in and were employed in their armies by local Hindu rulers. By the 14th century, Muslim preachers from Central Asia were also attracted to Kashmir. They gradually earned mass conversion of local people to Islam. Notably, one of the earliest converts was the ruler of the day himself—Rinchana.

For its natural splendour, Kashmir has always remained an object of greed and desire for conquerors and, consequently, a target of external aggression and occupation. A few centuries before and after the birth of Jesus Christ, Ashoka and Kanishka, respectively, grabbed Kashmir. In the 6th century AD, Mihirakula, along with his marauding hordes from the plains of India, descended on and captured the land. The Mughal occupation of Kashmir in 1586 AD brought an end to its independent status and set in a long period of subjugation, the darkest phase of which began with the onset of the Afghan rule. The occupation assumed the most heinous form during the Sikh and Dogra tyrannies. There was hardly any cruelty in its extreme form that the people of Kashmir were not subjected to by successive rulers. Today, the civilized world upholding the principle of human dignity would find it difficult to digest that in the mid-19th century, when it was waking up to the idea of human equality and freedom, Kashmir, along with its inhabitants and resources, was sold by the 'Mother of Democracy'—the Great Britain—to a warlord for a sum of 7.5 million *Nanakshahi* rupees. For a century, Gulab Singh and his dynasty skinned and threw in boiling oil their purchased subjects for as ordinary a 'crime' as catching a fish from a river or slaughtering a domestic animal to fight starvation. The Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras ruthlessly administered Kashmir and its people for four centuries before a freshly independent India arrived in October 1947.

For an overwhelming part of its history, Kashmir remained colonized and its natives disempowered. The earliest historical accounts do not provide any clue about the origin of Kashmir's ancient rulers, save a few such as Kanishka, Ashoka and Mihirakula—the invaders who conquered and ruled the land. Likewise, the Lohars came from Poonch,

Rinchana from Tibet, the Shah Mirs from Swat and the Chaks from Dardistan—all neighbouring lands. The Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras too were outsiders who subjugated Kashmir. Again, from the day Kashmir got its first Muslim ruler in the 14th century AD, not a single Muslim from the local stock of the mainland Kashmir ever became its ruler. When the Tatar warlord Zulchu and his horde descended on Kashmir, its ruler Sahadeva fled to Kishtwar and a Tibetan fugitive by the name of Rinchana appeared on the scene and helped Sahadeva's commander Ramachandra to ensure some semblance of normalcy. However, the two fell out, and Rinchana killed Ramachandra, ascended the throne and married his daughter, Kota Rani. Rinchana embraced Islam and thus became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir.

Rinchana's reign lasted for a brief spell. Upon his death, Kashmir reverted to a Hindu rule for a short period before a foreign wazir of Queen Kota Rani, Shah Mir, deposed her and imposed himself on the throne in 1339 AD. He assumed the name of Shamsuddin Shah Mir and founded the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir. The Shah Mir dynasty ruled for over two centuries. The prominent kings of this dynasty include Sultan Shahabuddin, Sultan Qutubuddin, Sultan Sikandar and Sultan Zainul Aabideen. The last years of the Shah Mir reign were a period of weak rulers who danced to the tunes of the nobility so much so that Ali Chak, one of the prominent nobles of the time, in an open court took off the crown from the head of Habib Shah and placed it on the head of his own brother Ghazi Chak, declaring him the king. This brought Kashmir under the rule of the Chak dynasty for the next 26 years until the Mughals came in 1586 AD. The Chaks came from Dardistan which comprises northern areas of Pakistan and northern Kashmir beyond the Rajdhan Pass. It includes Chitral, the upper reaches of the Panjkora River, Kohistan (highland) of Swat and the upper portions of the Gilgit Agency. The language of the Shah Mirs and Chaks, like the Mughals who succeeded them, was Persian, not Kashmiri. The Chak rule came to an end with the invasion of Akbar, the Mughal emperor, in 1586 AD. The arrival of the Mughals obliterated whatever pretence the Shah Mirs and Chaks might have had of attaining the status of naturalized Kashmiris by settling down in Kashmir over a period of time.

For the next 166 years, the Mughals ruled Kashmir less with compassion and more with an iron fist. In 1752 AD, they were driven out by the Afghans whose misrule over Kashmir lasted for 67 years. The Afghans were replaced by the Sikhs in 1819 AD who misgoverned Kashmir for 27 years till the infamous Treaty of Amritsar was signed in 1846 AD between British India and the Dogra ruler of Jammu Gulab Singh, under which the British sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh. The Dogras enslaved Kashmir for 100 years until newly independent India appeared on the scene in 1947 AD. For the past seven decades, Kashmir has undergone interchanging periods of relative calm and an all-out conflict. In 1989, Kashmir erupted violently against the Indian rule. Today, Kashmir is the world's most militarized area. Violence has killed tens of thousands of civilians during the past 27 years.

Kashmir is known to have a long recorded history. Its first widely known narrative, the *Rajatarangini*, was compiled by Kalhana, a 12th century AD local versifier. The fascinating narrative, spanning over four millennia, is sometimes strikingly precise but generally incredibly fictional. In it, there are characters in flesh and blood, and there are also supernatural beings with their paranormal actions. Kings take the form of gods, and gods come down from the heavens to deliver justice to wronged people. All this runs through the *Rajatarangini* as ink through the pen of the chronicler. An examination of the *Rajatarangini* reveals that it elevates mixing of fiction and history to an art form. Not surprisingly then, Kalhana's successors allowed sizeable room to myth and fiction in recording past events. Interpolation and contextual corruption further chipped at the recorded history of Kashmir. While the account of the earliest period was a free run of imagination, textual corruption in the account of the medieval period was not uncommon. Even religious texts like the *Nilamata Purana* could not escape interpolation. Aurel Stein observes that the text of the *Nilamata* is "in a very bad condition, owing to numerous lacunae and textual corruption of all kinds" and it appeared to him that "by no means improbable that the text has undergone changes and possibly additions at later periods."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Kashmir story, for long, has remained a blend of fact and fiction, with imaginary tales passed off as historical facts and events interpreted inversely. The *Rajatarangini* has attained the status of a scripture

that has to be believed without question. The result is that writing about the origin, history and geography of Kashmir has turned out to be a copy–paste exercise. There has been no or very little attempt to judge or analyse the ‘celebrated’ work for its accuracy, with the result that even today when we talk about Kashmir, we have to read about its past through the lexicon of the Hindu mythology only.

The earliest Brahman chroniclers do not provide us any view of Kashmir under Buddhism—a reigning religion in Kashmir for over a millennium—or its subsequent annihilation by militant Hinduism. Moreover, we do not know about the missing Buddhist relics that would have been aplenty in Kashmir during the heydays of the religion in a country where the ruler of the day organized the Universal Conference on Buddhism, which fixed and expounded the Sacred Canon.<sup>2</sup> Kalhana’s successors, such as Jonaraja and Srivara, were witnesses to the decline of Hinduism and the rise of Islam in Kashmir. Both were personally hurt by this phenomenal change that transformed the political and religious landscape of Kashmir. Sadly, this hurt appears to have taken the better of their narratives. Jonaraja saw three Muslim rulers on the throne of Kashmir but appears reluctant to mention the word ‘Muslim’, notwithstanding the fact that during his time the word *musalmaan* was in use in the local language, as is evidenced by a verse of the contemporary mystic poetess Lal Ded:

*Shiv chhui thali thali rozaan  
Mo zaan hyond te musalmaan*

[Do not differentiate between a Hindu and a Muslim. For, He, who created them all, is watching you everywhere.]

The establishment of the Muslim rule in Kashmir brought to the fore a new breed of chroniclers who broke from the tradition of recording events in Sanskrit and instead chose Persian, the court language of new rulers. These Muslim chroniclers, writing essentially about their own times, lifted the narrative about prehistoric Kashmir, as it was, from their Brahman predecessors and carried it forward along with its overriding part of myth and fiction. Through them, however, we come to know about the changed social landscape of Kashmir following the advent of the Muslim rule which Jonaraja and Srivara had

more or less not touched upon in their chronicles. The termination of the Muslim rule in 1819 AD again gave ascendancy to the Brahman historiographers. By then, the recording of events had somewhat come of age and largely met the standard requirements of historiography. However, the personal biases and prejudices of scribes found way into their texts. Thus, we see writer and author Pandit Anand Koul trying to pull a rabbit out of his hat by alluding to a presumption, obviously his own, that the famous Pathar Masjid in Srinagar was built out of the stones of the stairs leading to the Shankaracharya Temple.<sup>3</sup> The sole evidence the 'historian' relies on to make this sweeping conclusion was the three-letter assumption "it is said." Obviously, he was only sowing seeds of suspicion in the minds of his readers while narrating history. Pertinently, no chronicle of Kashmir, ancient or medieval, records a set of stairs having been built up to the Shankaracharya Temple. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that Gulab Singh (1846–57) constructed a stone staircase up to the shrine.<sup>4</sup> Koul, who has embellished his work with many imaginary tales, however, conveniently forgets to mention that the stone slabs in the courtyard of the same Pathar Masjid were uprooted during the Sikh period, when the mosque was converted into a grain store, and used to build a flight of steps on the river bank at Basant Bagh.

Assumptions being the basis of conclusions drawn by most of our modern writers and historians, the practice neither began with Koul nor ended with him. Everybody who took upon him- or herself the responsibility of narrating the Kashmir story fully used his or her creative skills. Take, for instance, this retired horticulture officer who, writing about Kashmir's celebrated tree chinara in the year 2002, suddenly changes track to lambast Sultan Sikandar, the 14th century ruler of Kashmir, for destroying temples which either were demolished before him or existed even after him. The writer rests his argument on the premise that since Sikandar destroyed temples, the chinars there "too must have been dealt with in the same way as temple structures."<sup>5</sup> Although the kings of the medieval period, Sikandar in particular, became the main target of a twisted narrative, the accusations levelled against them—persecution and forced migration of Hindus and destruction of their temples—returned as the core of the storyline since 1990. If a Muslim ruler of yore was posthumously held guilty

for these alleged crimes, his coreligionists face the same accusation six centuries after him. Kashmir, in short, continues to be a story largely based on hearsay rather than actual events.

The celebrated specimens of the recorded history of Kashmir are texts in verse which, in most part, suffer from serious shortcomings. Broadly, these can be identified as myth, prejudice, fiction and exaggeration. The earliest period, with the *Rajatarangini* as its record keeper, is weird owing to a heavy dose of myth. It is a free run of imagination wrapped in beliefs and perceptions of the versifier. The period, comprising a long era of about 3,000 years of the Gonandiya dynasty, is a description of persons and events that, in the words of Stein, can rarely be traced in other sources. Scholars have expressed serious doubts about the credibility of an overwhelming part of the work. Between Kalhana and the second crop of historians, there is a gap of three centuries (1150–1459 AD) during which no chronicle is known to have been written. The absence of a parallel narrative for such a long interlude saw the *Rajatarangini* attaining a reverential status. Moreover, it set a precedence of recording events in a manner in which the chronicler let his imagination run free.

The medieval period is distinguished by profound prejudice entering the works on Kashmir's history. This specifically pertains to the 14th–15th century period when Kashmir underwent a religious and social transformation, and the chroniclers of the period—Jonaraja and Srivara—were finding it hard to reconcile with the developing situation. An acute sense of loss of power and influence by their community adversely affected their works. Following the footsteps of Kalhana, medieval Sanskrit chroniclers also indulged in myth and fiction, which they cocktailed with prejudice. The followers of a new religion—different from the one practised by these scribes—that had taken root in Kashmir and was fast branching out became the object of bias. The prejudice manifested itself, on the one hand, in demonizing rulers like Sikandar and, on the other hand, in blacking out what represented the positive side of the Muslim rule or significant events related with it. Complete silence over construction of the Jama Masjid, the Khanqah-i-Mualla and a structurally small but historically very important mosque on the Takht-e-Sulaiman, and the presence of iconic personalities such as Sheikh Nooruddin or Mir Saiyid Ali

Hamdani on the social and religious landscape of Kashmir are some of the cases in point.

The establishment of the Sultanate saw the arrival of Muslim chroniclers who spared the Muslim rulers of unwarranted criticism. Generally, they recorded events and personalities fairly but, importantly, did not question or attempt to correct the overriding content of fiction and mythology in the earliest narratives. They carried forward their predecessors' observations about the previous Muslim rulers, especially Sikandar, almost with zest, perhaps in the misplaced belief of the kings having performed a religious duty. Saiyid Ali, a 16th century AD Persian chronicler, for instance, "is simply repeating the statement of Jonaraja"<sup>6</sup> when he writes that "in every village and town, where a temple existed it was demolished."<sup>7</sup> The anonymous author of the 17th century AD Persian text *Baharistan-i-Shahi* is another instance.<sup>8</sup> However, we find that the chronicles of this period recorded events and lives and accomplishments of Muslim rulers and hundreds of Muslim missionaries who changed the social and religious landscape of Kashmir. Their work was contemptuously ignored by Brahman chroniclers.

The return of the Hindu rule in the 19th century was followed by the reappearance of Brahman chroniclers. A series of historians and non-historians in persons of Anand Koul, P. N. K. Bamzai, Jia Lal Kilam, R. K. Parimu and others sanctified the mythological and imaginary content in ancient history and added exaggeration to the narrative. In their works, the Muslim rule spanning about five centuries, barring a brief spell under Zainul Aabideen, is the darkest phase in the life of a Kashmiri Brahman. In building their story, they ignored historical or circumstantial evidence that presents itself as a counterargument. Significantly, they also put under wraps severe and prolonged oppression of Muslims at the hands of their non-Muslim rulers. If it was not for the European travellers arriving in Kashmir in the 19th and early 20th centuries and their travelogues and books on what they observed, the most heinous cruelties ever suffered by mankind would have remained unknown to the outside world.

For several centuries, the history of Kashmir has remained under the occupation of Brahman writers who converted it into a story of the so-called aboriginal Hindus—the inheritors of five millennia



of uninterrupted history'—their forcible conversion, periodic uprooting and destruction of temples. For them, the 500 years of Muslim rule exists only as a grim reminder of the long-drawn-out persecution. Even about the period following its replacement by the non-Muslim (Sikh and Dogra) rule in 1819 AD, they allege discrimination and oppression. Somewhere in the middle of the 20th century, journalists from the community, which held monopoly on the profession, chipped in to help create an image of Kashmir that was far from reality. The bias they brought into the narrative also found way into the official publications printed after the termination of the Hindu rule in 1947 and formation of a 'popular government'. A specimen of this misrepresentation is *Keys to Kashmir* published in 1955 by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>9</sup> The book perpetuates the Hindu mythology and narrates factually incorrect historical events.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, it mentions festivals of the minority community in greater number and detail, with dates and occasions, while only a couple of those of the majority community are dealt with in single sentences.

## Notes and References

1. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, vol. II, 377.
2. Ibid., 355.
3. "It [Pathar Masjid] was constructed by Queen Nur Jahan, and it is said the stones of the stairs, which led up to the top of the Shankaracharya hill, were used in building it" (Koul, *Geography of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, 150).

Although Anand Koul is a Kashmiri Pandit who lived in a Muslim locality close to the Pathar Masjid. He must have seen the Pathar Masjid umpteen times during his long life. Till date, nobody has observed a sculptured stone used in its construction. Not to speak of stones, I say not a single stone. Noor Jahan used the same chiselled and sparkling stones in its construction which were used by the Mughal rulers in the construction of royal fortes, *baladaris* and mosques. (Ahmad, *Tarikh-i-Hassan* [Kashmiri], Annotation, vol. I, Part II, 799–800)

4. *Koshur Encyclopaedia*, vol. I, 304.
5. Wanchoo, *Chinar Tree, "Bouin" of Kashmir*.
6. Ali, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Trans. Rafiqi, e.n. 70, 182.
7. Ibid., 121.

8. The *Baharistan-i-Shahi* was written in 1614 AD, exactly two centuries after Sikandar had died. The 'loud manner' in which the author extols the propagation of the Shia sect of Islam in Kashmir by Shamsuddin Iraqi, Musa Raina and Kaji Chak, all staunch Shias, points to his being a follower of the same faith. What adds to this assumption is his strong dislike for Mirza Haider Dughlat, an alleged persecutor of the Shias. The author's extolling of Sikandar as doing some kind of virtuous deed by his alleged persecution of Hindus reflects his own bias when each time he takes the name of the king as an iconoclast, he invokes God's blessings (God bless his soul) for him. Simultaneously, he is unforgiving for Sikandar's son and successor, Zainul Aabideen, for reviving "idolatry and heresy" which, he recalls, had been stamped out during the reign of Sikandar. "The customs and practices of the polytheists and the heretics received fresh impetus and were given renewed currency," he writes about Zainul Aabideen whom Kashmiri Hindus remember as a benevolent king. "The community of infidels and heretics called him the Great King because they flourished under his rule and he was known by the name throughout his kingdom," he adds.
9. The book was published by the *Lala Rukh Publications* of the State's then Information & Broadcasting Department headed by Janki Nath Zutshi.
10. The book gives a detailed account of Hindu mythology on the emergence of the Valley of Kashmir out of mythical Satisar and credits its drainage to the folk hero Kashyapa but altogether ignores a parallel mythical account subscribed to by the Muslim majority community that the water of the lake was drained by Prophet Solomon who visited Kashmir during the reign of Narendra. Ratnagar, a historian prior to Kalhana, credits Sandiman or Solomon with draining the water of the huge lake that Kashmir was. Half of Kashmir had been inundated for a thousand years causing huge damages to life and crops. The hapless people on seeing the miracles of Solomon beseeched him to deliver them of this curse. Sandiman ordered his *jins* (Jinns or djinns or genies) to remove the blockade, which they did, and the submerged land became again available for agriculture (Shahpuria, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 107). Bernier has also alluded to this as an old legend among the people of Kashmir. The book ignores the scientific explanation given by geologists for the drainage of water and coming into existence of the Valley of Kashmir. Again, the book wrongly describes ascendancy of Zainul Aabideen to the throne as a consequence of the flight of Sinhadeo or Sahadeva in the wake of Tartar invasion which happened in 1319 AD, 100 years before Zainul Aabideen assumed power in 1420 AD after defeating his brother Ali Shah. Also, Chaks did not over-run Haider Shah, the son of Zainul Aabideen, as claimed by the book; he died after a brief rule of a year and few months.

## Chapter One

# Aborigines

The earliest story about Kashmir we know of is through the *Nilamata Purana*, an anonymous text in verse dealing with *tirthas*, rituals and ceremonies of Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> It is considered to be a treatise on the cultural history of Kashmir and provides a social background to the *Rajatarangini's* dynastic and political history.<sup>2</sup> In the *Nilamata* tale, the land of Kashmir was occupied by a vast lake for six *Manvantaras*<sup>3</sup> since the beginning of the *Kalpa*.<sup>4</sup> The six *yojanas*<sup>5</sup> long and three *yojanas* wide lake was called the Satisar. In the seventh *Manvantara*, on the plea of Kashyapa, the water of the lake was drained off through an outlet made with a plough by Ananta by the orders of Visnu who, along with other gods and goddesses, had come there to kill *Jalodbhava* (water-born), the demon who was invincible in the waters. On the death of *Jalodbhava*, the *Pisacas* and the descendants of *Manu* were settled there by Kashyapa to live in company of the *Nagas*, progeny of Kashyapa and his wife Kadru and the original inhabitants of the Valley.

The *Nagas* are believed to have been snake worshippers without any set religion or philosophy at the back of their spiritual life.<sup>6</sup> The *Nilamata* is ambiguous in so far as their form is concerned. Sometimes they peep out as humans and at other times as snakes living in water. This human-reptile specie appears to have had supernatural powers, making it easy for them to change form. The identity of *Pisacas* also remains undecided even as modern folklore associates them with the ghosts of persons dying an unnatural death. Their mention in the ancient Indian literature and the promiscuous use of the term *Pisaca* has led many scholars to doubt their existence as a tribe.<sup>7</sup> The *Naga* story has found way into the folk literature of Kashmir where we have a popular romantic folktale called *Hemaal Nagrai* in which a serpent hero *Nagrai* assumes human form and falls in love with

*Heemaal*, daughter of king Baldeva. Few place-names existent in south Kashmir, including a spring at Shopian, are even today sought to be linked with this folktale to establish the presence of the *Nagas* in prehistoric Kashmir.

The *Nilamata* was composed somewhere between the 6th and the 8th century AD. The lower and upper limits of the dates cannot go beyond this period as reasoned by Dr Ved Kumari Ghai thus:

Some alterations and additions were made in the text of the *Nilamata* after the 9th or the 10th century AD, in order to make it cope with the Monistic Shaiva Philosophy of Kasmira. Had the *Nilamata* been composed after the 9th or the 10th century AD, there would have been no scope for such changes. The lower limit of the date of the *Nilamata* may, therefore, be the 8th century AD. As regards the upper limit it may be about the 6th century AD, as Buddha began to be regarded as an incarnation of Visnu from about 550 AD.<sup>8</sup>

The *Nilamata* is a *mahatmya*, although Ghai insists on calling it a *Purana* because the text “has claimed this title for more than seven hundred years.”<sup>9</sup> One of its many names is *Kasmira Mahatmya*.<sup>10</sup> It contains in its body many *mahatmyas* such as the *Kaptasvara Mahatmya*, the *Asramasvami Mahatmya* and the *Vitasta Mahatmya*. A *mahatmya* is a handbook for priests of a particular *tirtha* intended to support the claims put forth on behalf of the holiness of the *tirtha* and the spiritual rewards promised for a visit to it.<sup>11</sup> In the words of K. M. Panikkar, *mahatmya* is a form of literature glorifying sacred localities, collecting and *often inventing* [italics mine] legends about them, showing how they were the favoured of the deity to which they were attached.<sup>12</sup> He describes ‘good many of them’ as valueless, except as propaganda literature for places of pilgrimage.<sup>13</sup> For its interest being ‘too local’,<sup>14</sup> the *Nilamata* does not fall in the category of a *Purana*. A *Purana* deals with a wide range of topics, particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore. Several of these texts are named after major Hindu deities such as Vishnu and Shiva.

The *Naga* and *Pisaca* story was lifted verbatim by Kalhana. In fact, he added to his text a couple of *Naga* tales for embellishment and effect.<sup>15</sup> Successive chroniclers and writers reproduced the story,

thereby sanctifying the existence of the two mythical tribes. Few traced the movement of ancient people and drew from comparative linguistic elements to 'establish' the existence and origin of *Nagas* and *Pisacas* in Kashmir. There are different premises about where they came from. For George Grierson, who vehemently denies Sanskrit the motherhood of the Kashmiri language, the *Nagas* and *Pisacas* were of Dardic stock and came from Dardistan. Some specifically trace their origin to Nagar, Hunza and other areas of Daradistan.<sup>16</sup>

So far as the earliest human presence in Kashmir is concerned, the previously held view that no stone tools of early man had been found in the proper Kashmir Valley no longer stands. It was observed that after prolonged investigation of the Ice Age in India and the associated human cultures, no such evidence had been found in Kashmir. The apparent absence of man in the Valley was attributed to the continued uplift of the outer Himalayas or the Pir Panjal range and the extreme cold during the second glacial period.<sup>17</sup> In 1969, however, a team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)<sup>18</sup> conducted excavations at Pahalgam in south Kashmir which yielded a massive flake and a crude (Abbevillian) hand axe from well-stratified deposits dating to the Second Glacial and Second Interglacial periods, respectively.<sup>19</sup> Plaster casts of these finds were exhibited at the UNESCO conference on *Homo sapiens* at Paris and were judged to be genuine tools by distinguished prehistorians.<sup>20</sup> Further work at Pahalgam by experts produced nine more tools from deposits attributable to the Second and Third Glacial periods.<sup>21</sup> On the basis of these finds, it was assumed that "the massive flake industry [in Kashmir] would be the earliest in the Indian subcontinent, and probably the earliest in Asia."<sup>22</sup>

For the purpose of fixing the stratigraphical horizon of the tools obtained from Pahalgam and to re-examine the Quaternary glacial sequence in that area, experts from Deccan College, Poona, and ASI, Nagpur, carried out a detailed survey of the Liddar Valley.<sup>23</sup> In their opinion, the Early Palaeolithic tools from Pahalgam seem to be of the Middle Pleistocene age.<sup>24</sup> These tools were found embedded in a boulder bed, which, according to geological definition, makes it rather difficult to know for sure whether the tools are *in situ* or represent a reworked location having been brought to their current location, like their host rocks, from some other location and deposited together with

the host boulders. In the latter case, they could definitely be older than the depositional age attributable to the boulder bed.

Irrespective of whether the tools were *in situ* or not, it is certain that they cannot be younger than the age of the boulder bed. There is no radiometric age data available on the boulder bed. However, a study aimed at determining the stratigraphic (depositional) age of the boulder bed conducted by scientists from Deccan Collège, Pune, and the ASI placed it in the Middle Pleistocene, which ranges from 0.78 to 0.13 million years before the present. Since the tools are reported to have been found at the base of the boulder bed, it is safe to assume their age no less than the lower age of the boulder bed, that is, 0.78 million years. In common parlance, it means that the man who used these stone implements lived in Kashmir at least 7.8 lakh years before the present.

Experts tell us that the prehistoric man was a wanderer and moved from one place to another in search of game which provided him sustenance. The prehistoric man of Kashmir too was a nomad and moved in and out of the Valley until the beginning of agricultural activity, when he decided to settle down. The earliest man in Kashmir lived at higher places such as Shopian, Gulmarg, Pahalgam or upper reaches along the Sindh river but by the mid-Pliocene period when the main lake or the mythological Satisar was drained, he came down to settle on the banks of the residuary lakes like Manasbal and started agricultural activities. With agricultural activities, settlements came about. The Burzahom and Gofkral sites have thrown up the thus far known first human settlements in Kashmir and these relate to 3000 BC–1000 BC or 5,000 years before the present.

Did *Nagas* and *Pisacas* actually exist or are these creation of some fertile mind? Legends like some folk hero draining water and making the land habitable for humans are not uncommon, and nobody knows which of these has the distinction of being the mother of all such fables. Nearer home, an analogous legend is told in China, according to which drainage of water made land habitable for humans and led to the emergence of the three-gorge river Yangtze:

In the demi-world where history intersects myth, it is said that the gorges were created by the ingenious folk hero, Yu, who, with the help of a troop of dragons, reconfigured China's hills and valleys to drain the land and make it habitable for humans.<sup>25</sup>

An old Chinese saying subscribes to this belief thus: "But for Yu, we all should have been fishes."<sup>26</sup> Like in the case of a valley emerging from drainage of water, stories like *Hemaal Nagrai*, which some writers refer to in order to prove the presence of the *Nagas* in the Valley, are not exclusive to Kashmir. Kashmiri folklore is a rich piece of literature made richer by the additions of *Naga* stories that have their origin in *Jatakas*,<sup>27</sup> *Puranas* and the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana.<sup>28</sup> It is very difficult to fix the origin of a folklore as the same tale with variables could be attested for many places. In central India, for instance, many Rajput tribes claim their right on the *Hemaal Nagrai* kind of tale where a *Naga* prince falls in love with a girl of their tribe.<sup>29</sup> Gulshan Majeed traces the origin of the *Hemaal Nagrai* folktale to Chota Nagpur,<sup>30</sup> where the rulers identified themselves as *Nag Bansi* Rajputs and progeny of a *Naga* king, who took human form, and a Brahman girl. To conceal his real identity, the serpent king had to keep his forked tongue in cheeks and his evil smelling breath away. The wife got suspicious, asked questions but failed to get an answer. The *Naga* took her on a pilgrimage where the woman developed labour pain. The real identity of her husband who turns into a Cobra was revealed to her, and she died after giving birth to twin male babies.<sup>31</sup>

Geologists have no argument with the claim that Kashmir was originally a lake formed with the rise of the Pir Panjal range. However, as against the *Nilamata* premise of a folk hero Kashyapa draining the lake water, they have scientific explanation to offer with regard to the emergence of the Valley and credit the drainage of water to tectonic changes. Geoscientist Dr M. I. Bhat, who specializes in the Himalayan geology, explains the emergence of the Valley thus:

As in case of the rest of the Himalayan mountain range, the Kashmir part of the range also emerged out of the Tethys Ocean following the collision of the Indian Plate with the Asian Plate about 50 million years ago. Due to continued collision, a large depression was developed at the beginning of the Pliocene epoch about four million years ago. The depression thus created, was soon filled with water as a result of drainage impoundment and the Kashmir intermontane depression assumed the status of a large inland lake. The lake attained greater depth when its western margin, the Pir Panjal Range, rose to its present height due to tectonic reactivation about 25,000 years ago. Concurrent

with this development, the Baramulla gorge opened and the entire lake water was drained, restoring the Valley to terrestrial conditions once again. The present day lakes like the Dal, the Anchar, the Manasbal and the Wular and swamps are the remnants of the erstwhile huge lake.<sup>32</sup>

The story of Kashmir's origin and its people, as given in the *Nilamata Purana*, rests on the existence of the *Nagas*. If there are no *Nagas*, the edifice of the story tumbles. We are familiar with the *Naga* presence in Gandhara, the Gangetic Valley and Central and North Eastern India where shrines and inscriptions are attributed to them, and where they suffered onslaught, extermination and excommunication by the invading Aryans. But did they exist in Kashmir? Professor Gulshan Majeed attempts an answer:

While going through all evidence about Naga lore of India (south India has been purposefully left out of the discourse), which includes historical records augmented by inscriptions, representations in plastic, numismatics and other material finds, we find the domain of Nagas (till 6th century CE) confined to particular segments in the north west India, lower Indus region, Gandhara, Gangetic valley, central India and north east India. It is the region where they faced Aryans, lived in hostility or symbiotic relationship with them, exterminated or excommunicated at times, built political regimes, or kingdoms and entered into matrimonial relations with the desirous parties from other communities or groups. Nowhere in whole of this discussion Kashmir figures anywhere.<sup>33</sup>

Significantly, the *Nilamata Purana* happens to be the only literary source to suggest the existence of the *Nagas* in ancient Kashmir. No *Purana*, *mahatmya* or any other brahminic writing, anterior to the *Nilamata Purana*, has surfaced to bestow Kashmir with *Naga* presence and cult<sup>34</sup> nor does any chronicler of the past point at this possibility. Remote historians such as Pliny,<sup>35</sup> Strabo<sup>36</sup> and Herodotus,<sup>37</sup> who mention Kashmir directly or indirectly in connection with an event, occurrence or a tribe, do not associate with it any kind of *Naga* cult.<sup>38</sup> Writer and scholar Professor Shafi Shauq holds the view that "the *Nagas* and the *Pisacas* are products of fantasy of the elite Brahmins as



are the *Asuras*, *Danavas*, *Malechas*, and the like.”<sup>39</sup> According to him, *Nilamata Purana* is an ancient folk tale that was given the form of a literary text in the 8th or 9th century AD: “It is a beautiful work of imagination, though there are intimations of old beliefs and rituals. The notion of lake origin is popular about many other regions. Then what is history about it?”<sup>40</sup>

After observing speaking silence about the *Nagas* in the ancient historical literature on Kashmir, one would naturally look for any archaeological evidence in support of the *Nilamata Purana* premise. Does the soil of Kashmir produce any evidence to establish their existence? Dr Abdur Rashid Lone, who teaches ancient Indian history and archaeology at the University of Kashmir, has the following to offer as an answer:

Nagas do have a historical base in the main land of India. Certain temple shrines and sculptures there are ascribed to them. But as far as Kashmir Valley is concerned, except in the *Nilmata Purana* and the *Rajatarangini*, they do not exist. From the archaeological perspective, we do not have any concrete evidence of their presence in Kashmir. The sculptures ascribed to them in the central India are completely missing from the archaeological record in Kashmir. Neither the Burzahom rock art nor the tiles from Harwan suggest anything to support the presence of Nagas in Kashmir. Scholars have argued that certain Naga tribes existed in Kashmir but that is only a projection of the Brahmanical point of view propagated through the *Nilamata Purana* and the subsequent literature influenced by it.<sup>41</sup>

During the first half of the 20th century, an important development took place in Kashmir with respect to its past. Archaeologically, a very significant site, Burzahom Neolithic, in Srinagar district was discovered that unearthed facts about the earliest dweller of Kashmir. Burzahom is a comprehensive story of cultural sequence in Kashmir between 3000 BC and 1000 BC. In a short excavation in 1939, De Terra and Paterson collected some bone and stone tools from here. Subsequent exploration by the ASI brought to light about a dozen similar sites such as Begagund, Brah, Gofkral, Hariparigom, Jayadevi-udar, Olichibag, Pampur, Panzogom, Sombur, Thajiwor and Waztal, all located on

karewas, especially in the southeast parts of the Kashmir Valley. Extensive excavation conducted at Burzahom by the ASI from 1960 to 1971 brought to light a fourfold sequence of cultures: Periods I and II—Neolithic, Period III—Megalithic and Period IV—early, Historical.<sup>42</sup> The importance of Burzahom can be appreciated by the following UNESCO reference about the site:

The core aspects of the Burzahom Neolithic seem to have originated and organically evolved on the soil of Kashmir, and bear an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which has now largely disappeared. The nominated property with its entire cultural equipment range has potential for future excavation and other avenues of research which is surely ripe with new set of information throwing a welcome light on the formative stages of culture and civilization in this part of the world. Sometime at the turn of the fourth millennium BCE, the Neolithic Burzahom appears to the major centres of prehistoric man's activity in Kashmir. The detailed study of the material culture, palaeo-climate, flora, and fauna, micro-wear studies, and other multidisciplinary studies has provided an opportunity to understand and analyse the interaction of the Neolithic population of Burzahom with the Himalayan hinterland and the riverine sites of West Asia.... The entire site retains its physical integrity and is still set in a landscape that is reminiscent to the natural setting of the Neolithic men approximately in 4th millennium BC.<sup>43</sup>

In the absence of archaeological evidence attesting to the presence of the *Nagas* or *Pisacas*, it is hard to take them as historical entities. "They were possibly not even humans,"<sup>44</sup> which prospect is hinted at by the *Nilamata* itself when it also mentions them as serpents living in water. Whatever their form, the soil of Kashmir has produced no evidence to confirm their existence. On the other hand, Burzahom and Gofkral give us ample idea about the earliest dwellers in Kashmir. The core aspects of the Burzahom Neolithic seem to have originated and organically evolved on the soil of Kashmir and bear an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which has now largely disappeared.<sup>45</sup> Importantly, no religious images or icons giving any idea about the religious beliefs of the dwellers have been found at these sites: "In

different places of the world, we find an image or an icon worshipped by people of that area at one point in time. In Burzahom we have found no such icon or image."<sup>46</sup> However, what we know for sure from the findings there is that the Neolithic man in Kashmir buried his dead in carefully dug graves, in some cases alongside their domesticated animals. In the words of Aijaz Ahmad Bandey:

The burials of men, women and children seem to point to a high degree of respect for the dead as the graves, in which they were buried, were carefully dug and smoothened with a coat of plaster on the surrounding walls. The dead were so revered by the living members of a family that the graves were dug not away from their residences but under the floors of their living houses.<sup>47</sup>

The Burzahom and Gofkral excavations did not throw up any evidence that could be linked with the presence of the *Nagas* in Kashmir. Human figures in a hunting scene engraved on a stone slab corresponding to 1700–800 BC do not carry any *Naga* motifs. Subsequent to Burzahom and Gofkral, the Semthan settlement, which is Kashmir's journey from the megalithic period directly to historical period, too does not offer any information about the *Nagas*. The Semthan settlement near Bijbihara in south Kashmir "continues the tradition set by Burzahom and Gofkral; indications of pise and pebble walls and wheel turned red ware of fine paste, with slip treatment and the kind of pottery establishes their community life."<sup>48</sup> The numismatic finds from the site show Kashmir's connection with Indo-Greeks as does a standing Greek deity on a clay seal excavated from the site.<sup>49</sup> The terracotta figurine from the late Semthan (1st–2nd century AD) too bears no *Naga* resemblance. No such evidence has come forth from human or animal figures also on the Harwan tiles belonging to the 2nd–3rd century AD. "It cannot be the case that when [the] *Nagas* of India were being depicted with all their motifs and essential characteristics, Kashmir *Nagas*, who according to the *Nilamata* were so prominent and culturally overwhelming, were deliberately ignored by the executioners of art and crafts."<sup>50</sup>

Besides three major religions—Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam—that held sway on its inhabitants at different times, many cults and faiths that worshipped natural forces are believed to have been present

in Kashmir in its prehistoric period. However, we have no material evidence to substantiate this belief. The earliest religious images, both in clay and stone unearthed in Kashmir, belong to Buddhism and relate to the 3rd and 4th century AD. The earliest Hindu religious images are traced to the 5th or 6th century AD and bear marked influence of Buddhism. The Waghom Gajalakshmi image shows even the hand-held emblems, while the modelling and costumes remain the same. "Many of the Vijabror [Bijbihara] images look as the imitations of the Gandhara, with the exception that in certain cases the iconography was changed from that of classical Gandhara Buddhist images to the Brahminical one."<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the 6th century sculpture of *Kartikeya* "compares closely with a Gandhara *bodhisattva* [italics mine] image of the 2nd/3rd century in terms of its massive frame with powerful shoulders and strictly frontal stance, bearing Greek stamp on the modelling."<sup>52</sup> So far as Hinduism is considered, archaeological evidence is not clear. From the surface explorations at many sites, such as Baramulla, Bijbihara, Devsar, Awantipora and Martand, a large number of stone sculptures of different stone materials were recovered. These include a goddess, *Shiva lingam*, bull, etc., whose affiliation is generally accorded with *Saivism* and *Vaishnavism*. Art historians prescribe dates not earlier than 4th–5th century AD to this kind of art in Kashmir.

The period during which the *Nilamata Purana* was composed is very significant as it coincides with the annihilation of Buddhism in Kashmir. The Buddhist religious signs were demolished or converted into temples and the followers of the religion persecuted. The following excerpt from a book by Jialal Kilam about the history of the Kashmiri Pandits allows a peep into what the Buddhists in Kashmir had suffered:

During the reign of Nara I "thousands of monasteries were burnt, and thousands of villages that supported those monasteries were given over to the Brahmins." Brahmins having succeeded in establishing their supremacy set themselves in right earnest in strengthening themselves and their position. Many superstitious observances and practices were invented. Thought and culture were denied to everybody excepting themselves and the modern Hinduism in Kashmir began its growth.<sup>53</sup>

Mihirakula, the 6th century AD monster king and patron of *Shaivism*, did everything to wipe out Buddhism from the face of Kashmir. The remnants of the religion were assimilated into *Shaivism* so much so that the founder of the religion, Gautama the Buddha, too was absorbed into the Hindu Pantheon as an incarnation of Visnu who, in popular Hindu belief, is considered as the preserver and upholder of *dharma*. The *Nilamata* prescribes celebration of his birthday.<sup>54</sup> It also lays down bathing of the Buddha image in water "rendered holy with all herbs, jewels and scents," decoration of houses with paintings, celebration of a festival swarming with dancers, worshipping of Buddha with eatable offerings, flowers, clothes, etc., and giving charities to the poor for three days.<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note that while many of the late *Puranas* and works such as those of Ksemendra, Jayaratha and Kalhana identify Buddha with Visnu, all of them denounce Buddhism indirectly by assigning Buddha the task of deluding the people.<sup>56</sup> The departure by the *Nilamata* in mentioning Buddha in a spirit of catholicity looks calculated. Buddhism in Kashmir, although under serious attack, still held sway on people when the *Nilamata* was composed. The *Shaivite* Brahmins were on the course of assimilating Buddhism and its followers into Brahmanism. In contrast to *Puranic* literature, they accorded a high pedestal to the Buddha in an effort to earn conversion of Buddhists to Hinduism. However, the fall of Kushans paved the way for exploits of the Brahmins who later even modified Buddhist statues to give them a Hindu appearance. The 5th century AD Buddhist statue of Baramulla symbolizes the modification to present it as a Shiva image. However, even after modifications "which are naive, Buddha is still discernable."<sup>57</sup> The Brahmins who had Mihirakula's patronage and were now holding power and influence propagated *Shaivism* and built a new religious narrative through the *Nilamata Purana*. The *Nilamata*, thus, marked an orbit round which the history and culture of Kashmir was constructed. The text became the argument and the evidence on the 'Hindu origin' of Kashmir and its people.

After assimilating its Buddhist population and their chief religious figure, it was turn of the geography of Kashmir to be moulded according to Hindu beliefs and ceremonies. Hence, water bodies, mountains,

and places and shrines were christened (or rechristened) by assigning to them names already in vogue or recommended by the Brahminic literature in India. Springs were assigned to serpent gods. Sheshnag, Anantnag, Vasukh Nag and Takshakh Nag were offered additional dwelling places in Kashmir over and above their original abodes in India.<sup>58</sup> Not surprisingly then, the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Brahma Purana*, one of the 18 major *Mahapuranas*<sup>59</sup> of Hindus in India, carry a large number of identical verses.<sup>60</sup> *Mahatmyas* were written as guides to the newly set up or the converted shrines and religious places, consecrating these to various Hindu gods and highlighting merits of their pilgrimage. Religious literature, including the *Nilamata Purana* and the *mahatmyas*, was written in Sanskrit language as against the language spoken by the local people. The Brahmins engaged in this task came from Vedic India where Sanskrit was the language of their scriptures. Their contempt for the language of the common Kashmiris was monumental as reflected by Kalhana's scorn for a 9th century ruler of Kashmir who did not speak Sanskrit.<sup>61</sup> Kashmiri language, as old as Kashmiri people and a continuum without any specific beginning,<sup>62</sup> was eventually evicted from the literary and intellectual sphere, thus completing the cultural aggression on Kashmir.

Mythology is a vital feature of every culture and plays an important role in the lives of its believers. Narratives of ancient civilizations, such as the Greek, the Roman, the Egyptian and the Indian, have their major content in mythology. However, it is weird to historically accord aborigine status to a tribe that exists only in mythology. Moreover, the concept of aborigines does not sync with a land like Kashmir which is geographically contiguous with many other lands such as Central Asia, China, Afghanistan and India. It goes well with a land mass circled by oceans like Australia.

## Notes and References

1. Pannikar, Introduction to *The Nilamata Purana* by Ved Kumari Ghai, I: v.
2. Ibid., v-vi.
3. *Manvantara* is an astronomical period of time measurement. According to Hinduism, *Manvantara* is created and ruled by a specific *Manu* (the Hindu progenitor of humanity) who in turn is created by Brahma, the Creator himself. The

- specific Manu creates the world and all its species during that period of time. Each Manvantara lasts the lifetime of a *Manu*, upon whose death, Brahma creates another *Manu* to continue the cycle of Creation or *Shristi*.
4. Fourteen *Manus* and their respective *Manvantaras* constitute one *Kalpa*.
5. *Yojana* is a measure of distance differently regarded as equal to four, five, nine or eighteen English miles (Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 16).
6. Aash, "Jammu Mai Nagmat," 315.
7. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 58.
8. Ibid., 14.
9. Ibid., 1: 5.
10. Ibid., 1.
11. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, II: 380.
12. Pannikar, Introduction to *The Nilamata Purana* by Ved Kumari Ghai, I: v.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 36.
16. Hassnain, *Buddhist Heritage of Kashmir*.
17. Sankalia, *New Evidence for Early Man in Kashmir*, 1971.
18. The team comprised H. D. Sankalia, R. K. Pant and Sardari Lal.
19. Sankalia, *New Evidence for Early Man in Kashmir*, 1971.
20. These included Professor Francois Bordes, L. S. B. Leakey and H. L. Movius. The exhibition was held in September 1969.
21. Ibid. (The team comprised R. V. Joshi, S. N. Rajaguru, Z. D. Ansari and H. D. Sankalia)
22. Ibid.
23. They included R. V. Joshi, S. N. Rajaguru, R. S. Pappu and B. P. Bopardikar. Pahalgam is part of the Liddar Valley.
24. Quaternary Glaciation and Palaeolithic Sites in the Liddar Valley (Jammu and Kashmir), *World Archaeology*, 369–79.
25. *National Geographic*, Washington, September 1997, 21.
26. Ibid.
27. The *Jataka* tales are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha. These are the stories that tell about the previous lives of the Buddha, in both human and animal forms. The future Buddha may appear in them as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant—but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates (Encyclopaedia Britannica: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jataka\\_tales#cite\\_ref-1](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jataka_tales#cite_ref-1)).
28. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 48.
29. Ibid., 39.
30. Chota Nagpur was group of nine princely states in the British India which later formed parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa in the Indian federation.
31. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 39.
32. In an interview with the author on 27 February 2016.

33. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 32–33.
34. *Ibid.*, 33.
35. Pliny (23–79 AD), was ancient Roman nobleman, scientist and historian who authored *Naturalis Historia* or Pliny's *Natural History*.
36. Strabo, who lived between 64/63 BC and 24 AD, was a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian. His most notable work was *Geographica* or Geography, which presented a descriptive history of people and places from different regions of the world known to his era.
37. Herodotus, a contemporary of Socrates, was a Greek historian who lived in the 5th century BC (484–25 BC). He was widely referred to as The Father of History. He is known for his work *The Histories*.
38. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 33.
39. In an interview with the author on 1 March 2016.
40. *Ibid.*
41. In an interview with the author on 6 March 2016.
42. Archaeological Survey of India, "Excavations—Important—Jammu & Kashmir."
43. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *The Neolithic Settlement of Burzahom*, 2014.
44. Ajaz Ahmad Bandey, in an interview with the author on 22 February 2016. Formerly Professor at the Centre for Central Asian Studies, Bandey retired as Head of the Centre in 2015.
45. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *The Neolithic Settlement of Burzahom*, 2014.
46. See note 44.
47. Bandey, *Prehistoric Kashmir*, 236–37.
48. Pande, "The Neolithic in Kashmir"; Agarwal, *Kashmir and its Monumental Glory*.
49. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 33.
50. *Ibid.*, 33–34.
51. Bandey, "Silk Route Manifestations in Kashmir Art," 156.
52. *Ibid.*, 165–67. The sculpture from Bijbihara is now in Peshawar Museum, Pakistan.
53. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 7.
54. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 175.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, 10.
57. Bandey, "Silk Route Manifestations in Kashmir Art," 35.
58. *Ibid.*, 38. In recent years, we have seen Kashmiri Pandit migrants setting up replicas of the *Khirb Bavani* Temple at Janipora in Jammu and *Hari Parbat* Temple at Faridabad in Haryana. "In Jammu and Delhi, one also finds replications of many important ashrams of saints and sages of the Valley.... Also, many temples have come up in Jammu which have been named after the original ones in Kashmir" (Koul, "Identity Politics of Kashmiri Pandits," 269).
59. A *Mahapurana* is a genre of Hindu religious texts.



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60. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 11.
  61. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, book V, verse 206.
  62. Shauq, *Kashmiri-English-Hindi Reader* (Introduction). The language is essentially different from all the Indo-Aryan languages, that is, Sanskrit, Upabhranshas and the Prakrits. It is also fundamentally different from Iranian languages. Its syntax, morphology and phonology are unique among all the languages of South Asia, but interestingly closer to the Slavic languages and the Germanic languages like English (ibid.).

## Chapter Two

# Mind's Eye

About 400–600 years after the *Nilamata Purana* was composed, Kashmir had the first known account of its political history, again a Sanskrit *kavya*, in the form of the *Rajatarangini*, literally meaning the river of kings. By his work, Kalhana earned for Kashmir a ‘unique distinction’ of having the longest recorded narrative in the Indian subcontinent. The text chronicles about four millennia of its past and is reckoned as a masterpiece with awesome literary excellence, flow and graphic details. This fact can as well be appreciated by translations of the work. The text has received eminence of an inevitable reference on Kashmir and for its author an enviable position and such fame that refuses to recede with the passage of time. The *Rajatarangini* is the basis on which rests the claim that Kashmir has a recorded history of 5,000 years.

Barring a few praiseworthy references that establish him as a master versifier, none of his contemporaries have written enough about Kalhana so as to let posterity know about this great versifier in some detail. Paradoxically, the person known to have brought to light 4,000 years of Kashmir’s ancient history has left behind no account of his own life. Whatever little we are acquainted with him is through conjecture drawn from his work. The only thing known for certain is the time when he compiled his work and that is straight from the horse’s mouth. From the preface of his narrative, we come to know that he started composing the *kavya* in 1148–49 AD and was done in a year.<sup>1</sup> From his work, he emerges as a male chauvinist who believes that “the course of women even of noble descent moves by nature downwards, like that of rivers.”<sup>2</sup> With no account about his personal life being available, the assumption is that he was the son of Champak, *dwaarpati* or the incharge of border areas of Harsha, the ruler of Kashmir between

1089 AD and 1101 AD. Kalhana waxes eloquent in praise of Champak and takes pains in explaining his absence during the last moments of King Harsha.<sup>3</sup> He gives a graphic account of dialogue between the two, referring to an incident which could not have been known to anyone other than Champak himself.<sup>4</sup> "The special account of this incident and the whole discourse becomes clear when we assume that Kalhana was [the] son of this minister."<sup>5</sup> He also refers to Champak's brother, Kanak, at a couple of places, including his successful efforts to dissuade Harsha from destroying the largest idol of the Buddha at Parihaspura, which Kalhana refers to as Kanak's birthplace.<sup>6</sup> If the presumptions that Kalhana was the son of Champak and Kanak was latter's brother are correct, then it can be assumed that the author of the *Rajatarangini* may have belonged to Parihaspura in Kashmir. Other aspects of his life that the *Rajatarangini* unveils are his being a master of Sanskrit language and a *Shaivite* Hindu in his religious beliefs.

The *Rajatarangini* first came to prominence through its translation three centuries after it was composed, when Zainul Aabideen, the 15th century ruler of Kashmir, was smitten by the narrative and ordered its Persian translation.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent Persian histories of Kashmir also brought it into fame by drawing from it.<sup>8</sup> However, the chronicle actually attained celebrity status only through its English renditions done in the 19th and early 20th centuries by M. A. Stein and Ranjit Pandit. Today, the narrative is read and quoted through these translations, especially Stein's, rather than through the original Sanskrit text. The two English translations generated and contributed to the controversy that has since plagued the poetic tome. The translators have apportioned the *Rajatarangini* into two radically opposite categories of 'Orientalist' and 'Nationalist'.<sup>9</sup>

Chitralekha Zutshi is of the opinion that for Stein, the "*Rajatarangini* was foremost a Kashmiri narrative that illustrated the peculiarity of Kashmir's geographical position, which explains equally that remarkable individuality which characterizes the historical development of the country and constitutes its chief interest."<sup>10</sup> She argues that Pandit, on the other hand, performed "the double act of appropriating this history of a region into the nation's collective literary heritage, thereby incorporating the region into the nation."<sup>11</sup> Pandit's translation had a specific purpose of using the

narrative to showcase Kashmir as part of India rather than a separate geographical entity. The *Rajatarangini* being composed in Sanskrit, a language with ‘pan-Indian pretensions,’<sup>12</sup> came handy for him. He was doing the translation for his Kashmiri father-in-law and leader of the Indian National Congress, Motilal Nehru, who regretted his inability to read the history of his old family homeland because of his unacquaintance with Sanskrit. The paratexts of Pandit’s translation “reflect a multiple ideological inheritance as they seek to present the narrative as a national [read Indian] literary text for the consumption of an incipient national audience.”<sup>13</sup>

From his work, Kalhana emerges as a strong believer in *Shaivism* and his description of events and personalities is fully loaded with his religious beliefs. The storyline done by him was faithfully followed by successive chroniclers. Kalhana is regarded as one of the outstanding icons of Kashmir. Ironically, however, he strongly despised the local language. He considered Sanskrit as *devabhasha* or divine language and had contempt for those who spoke in the native lingo. His description of the language of masses is a classical example of disrespect when he terms it as “vulgar speech fit for drunkards” and comes down heavily on a 9th century ruler of Kashmir, Samkaravarman, for speaking in this language. For this ‘sin’ he calls him a descendent of a family of spirit distillers.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, however, he draws full inspiration from the cultural milieu he lived in and uses words, idioms, expressions, phrases and proverbs of the native language.

With the pre-eminent place the *Rajatarangini* enjoys among the chronicles on Kashmir, it has more or less attained reverence of a scripture so far as the ancient history of Kashmir is concerned. The veneration has literally made it an incontestable source for the history of Kashmir that has to be believed and not dispassionately examined. The lovers of *Rajatarangini* consider it to be a great work of historiography that encapsulates several thousand years of Kashmir’s past till Kalhana’s own time. Any detailed work spreading over such a long period would literally need years, if not decades, to complete. One could understand a piece of fiction as voluminous as the *Rajatarangini* being composed in a short period but chronicling in verse the political and social milieu representing about four millennia would require several years of continuous labour even from the best of the masters

of the language. It goes to the genius of Kalhana to have completed the 'epic work' in just one year. He started writing the narrative in the year 4224 Lukikasamvat,<sup>15</sup> corresponding to 1148–49 AD, as is evident from a verse in Book I of the *Rajatarangini*, and completed it a year later in 4225 Lukikasamvat as Book VIII testifies.<sup>16</sup> Even today, with online libraries and Google search engine available at the fingertips, far more time would be required to only sift through relevant material and sources to compose a work of this nature and volume. The *Rajatarangini*, it may be recalled, comprises eight *tarangas* containing as many as 7,826 odd verses.

The *Nilamata Purana* provided the cultural background to political and social history that Kalhana weaved with his mastery over words. He fully absorbed in his text the *Nilamata*'s mythological content and built on the foundation provided by it. The story of drainage of water and emergence of the Valley of Kashmir narrated in the *Rajatarangini* is the reproduction of the *Nilamata* account. In constructing political history also, he borrows from the *Nilamata* to begin his story with Gonanda who is mentioned as the first ruler of Kashmir. According to his own admission, he obtained the names of at least the first four kings from the *Nilamata Purana*. The admission is contained in verse 16 of Book I which reads: "Among the fifty-two rulers whom those [former scholars] do not mention, on account of the loss of traditions, four viz., Gonanda and [his successors,] have been taken [by me] from the *Nilamata [Purana]*."<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, the *Nilamata* suffers from textual corruptions, a fact which has been recognized by many scholars. Aurel Stein, for one, has referred to it. So has Ved Kumari Ghai. In latter periods, the text has also suffered changes and additions. Stein observes, "The text is unfortunately in a very bad condition, owing to numerous lacunae and textual corruptions of all kinds.... It appears to me by no means improbable that the text has undergone changes and possibly additions at later periods."<sup>18</sup>

Before the *Rajatarangini*, there had been works of ancient date containing the royal chronicles of Kashmir.<sup>19</sup> These include Suvrata's poem, Ksemendra's *Narpavali* and chronicles of Padmamihira and Chavillakar. From the *Rajatarangini*, we gather that Kalhana had consulted as many as 11 earlier works on religious and historical literature excluding the *Nilamata Purana*. None of these works, however,

have come down to us,<sup>20</sup> hence are not available 'for comparison.'<sup>21</sup> These works were Kalhana's eyes to peep into the ancient Kashmir. However, he himself is not sure about their credibility on account of either being troublesome reading owing to the author's misplaced learning<sup>22</sup> or no longer existing in complete state<sup>23</sup> or having become fragmentary in consequence<sup>24</sup> or lack of dexterity in the exposition of the subject-matter<sup>25</sup> or no part being free of mistakes.<sup>26</sup> The shaming of these sources by Kalhana himself raises some questions: Wherefrom did he collect his information about 3,000 years of Kashmir's past? Did he rely on the same 'fragmentary, dexterity-lacking, troublesome reading, misplaced and full-of-mistakes' sources or did he reconstruct prehistoric Kashmir purely with his poetic imagination? In either case, the authenticity of an overwhelming portion of his work is put to question.

Kalhana's contemporaries such as Manakh and Alak Dat have described him not as a historian but as a poet *par excellence*. Manakh, in his poem *Srikanth Charit*, has portrayed him as occupying the place of prominence among the outstanding poets.<sup>27</sup> Alak equates him with the legendary poet, Bilhana, and finds his poem [read the *Rajatarangini*] mirroring the latter's skill.<sup>28</sup> In the opening verses of the *Rajatarangini*, Kalhana himself gives us enough hint to assume that his poetic imagination has heavily worked in producing his epic work. He describes poets as *prajapatis* in creative power, able to bring forth lovely productions that can place the past times before the eyes of men.<sup>29</sup> He boastfully claims, "If the poet did not see in his mind's eye the existences which he is able to reveal to all men, what other indication would there be of his possessing divine intuition?"<sup>30</sup> Here, Kalhana alludes to the 'mind's eye, creative power and divine intuition' of a narrator that go into making of an important work like the *Rajatarangini*. He possessed "a keen, observant eye, considerable sense of humour, vivid poetic imagination and extensive knowledge of human nature,"<sup>31</sup> which he put to use to record events preceding him by 3,000 years.

The *Rajatarangini* has shrouded the history of Kashmir in legend and mythology. As a master versifier, the author has interwoven these with happenings in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. The narrative, though of high literary value, is

thus hard to be fully regarded as a reliable source of history. Added to this are distortions that have crept into the text over the centuries as alluded to by several writers. According to Aurel Stein, up to the 7th century AD, Kalhana has adopted "a wholly artificial nature of the chronology," which "represents an attempt to fill a great chasm in historical tradition by figures bearing a fictitious look of exactness."<sup>32</sup> Walter Lawrence, who has extensively quoted from the *Rajatarangini* in his work, *The Valley of Kashmir*, is ready to accept it as "a trustworthy record from the middle of the ninth century onwards" only.<sup>33</sup> Stein observes:

The contents of Kalhana's work from the point of view of the critical tests which we are able to apply to them, divide themselves into two great portions, marked also by a corresponding difference in their intrinsic historical value. The narrative of Books IV–VIII which extends from the beginning of the Karkota dynasty to Kalhana's own time, we are able to check in many important points by independent evidence from other sources, such as coins, inscriptions and the notices of Indian and foreign writers. Our position is very different in regard to the first three Books containing the narrative of the earlier epoch. The record here found of the successive Gonandiya dynasties, whose rule is supposed by Kalhana to have filled an aggregate period of nearly 3050 years, consists mainly of bare dynastic lists interspersed with more or less legendary traditions and anecdotes. The persons and events which figure in them, can but rarely be traced in our other sources, and then, too, only with considerable variations as to date and character.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, out of the total 4,000 years of Kashmir's history that Kalhana reconstructs for us, the narration of 3,000 years is not corroborated by any other source. The reconstruction of this overwhelming period appears to be the result of his poetic imagination, for he was a great versifier of Sanskrit language. There is consensus among scholars on recounting of this period being imaginary. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his foreword to Ranjit Pandit's translation, appears in a dilemma over whether to describe Kalhana's work as history or poetry for its "vague and sometimes fanciful" early sections but "quickly warms up to the text as presenting evidence of Kashmir's ties to India."<sup>35</sup> Nehru's

warming up to the text despite expressing doubts on its authenticity, at least for its major portion, could be understood in the background of his politics which did not see Kashmir outside the boundaries of India. Lack of authenticity in the first three Books of the *Rajatarangini* can be illustrated by many examples. Stein finds the chronology of these three books to be “widely different position[s]”<sup>36</sup> as compared with the rest. He observes:

Here we are furnished nowhere with true dates but only with figures indicative of the supposed duration of the individual reigns. Kalhana cannot supply even these figures for the initial part of his dynastic list, comprising characteristically enough fifty-two ‘lost reigns’. Yet notwithstanding this acknowledged want of tradition we find Kalhana fixing the imaginary date of a legendary event previous to these ‘lost reigns’ as the starting point of his chronological calculations. The latter are vitiated not only by the unhistorical character of the initial date, but also by arbitrarily chosen aggregates for the duration of specific dynasties. For these aggregates Kalhana cannot adduce his authority, nor even claim the support of a uniform tradition of the assent of his predecessors.<sup>37</sup>

The imagination of the storyteller in Kalhana touches fantastic heights when he narrates the expeditions of Meghavahana, the ruler of Kashmir, near the sea resting under palm trees and planning to invade Lanka [present Sri Lanka] to teach the ‘land of demons’ the ways of peace.<sup>38</sup> With the same poetic ease, one might say, he lets Jayapida triumphantly march into Nepal and credits him with successes there and in the East. Likewise, Ranaditya’s rule spreads over a period of 300 years<sup>39</sup> and Mihirakula’s rule is recorded 700 years ahead of his father, Toromana.<sup>40</sup> The 11th century philosopher, mathematician and historian, Alberuni, who learnt Sanskrit and seriously studied Hindu philosophy and culture before penning his masterly account of India, *Kitab-ul-Hind*, finds Hindu chroniclers generally not paying “much attention to the historical order of their kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling.”<sup>41</sup> This ‘tale-telling’ abounds in the *Rajatarangini*.



In the use of his 'mind's eye,' Kalhana has lost sight of time and space and observed people living in two different epochs at one place at a given point in time. Thus, we see Sri Krishna, a Hindu god, quoting from the *Nilamata Purana* which was composed in the 6th–8th century AD. According to Kalhana, after the demise of Damodara I, Sri Krishna had the king's pregnant widow, Yashovati, installed on the throne of Kashmir. When the adversaries grumbled at the coronation of a woman, he appeased them by reciting this verse from the *Nilamata Purana*: "Kasmir land is Parvati; know that its king is a portion of Shaiva. Though he be wicked, a wise man who desire [his own] prosperity, will not despise him."<sup>42</sup> Likewise, a lake in north Kashmir is described as the source of River Ganga<sup>43</sup> (The Ganges) that actually flows through the Indian Plains and has its source in Gangotri in the Himalayas. Or, look at his description of a *tirtha*, identified by Stein as located in Shupian, a south-Kashmir town in the lap of the Punjal Mountain, from where, Kalhana believed, "one at once reaches Sarada"<sup>44</sup> (or Sharda), a Hindu shrine in the (now) Pakistan Administered Kashmir. Such a long distance could only be covered 'at once' through poetic imagination.

The *Rajatarangini* intertwines mystery with the history of Kashmir by attributing super-natural powers to its characters. They appear to be supermen rather than normal mortals and even burn their adversaries into ashes by blowing out fire. When the lecherous king Nara, we are told, cast his evil eyes upon the wife of a *Naga* and tried to bodily lift her, the couple went to the Lord of the *Nagas* who rose blind with fury and cast

dense darkness by thundering clouds of sinister look, he burned the king with his town in a rain of fearful thunderbolts. The *Vitasta* (ritualistic name of the Jhelum) which carried the marrow, blood and fat flowing from the bodies of the burned men, looked as if adorned with the eyes of peacocks' tails.<sup>45</sup>

King Damodara II, a ruler of Kashmir at least a century before Christ, is turned into a snake by the wrath of a group of Brahmins whom he refused food before he had taken a bath. Unless he heard the whole of Ramayana in a single day the curse would not cease. "Even to this day people recognize him by the steam of his breath, which

the curse has made hot, as he rushes about in search of water far and wide on the *Damodara-Suda*,<sup>46</sup> writes Kalhana about 1,300 years after the supposed incident. Given the hard-to-believe stories in the Rajatarangini, Stein observes:

Miraculous stories and legends taken from traditional lore are related in a form showing that the Chronicler fully shared the naive credulity from which they had sprung. Manifest impossibilities, exaggerations and superstitious beliefs, such as which we must expect to find mixed with historical reminiscences in popular tradition, are reproduced without a mark of doubt or critical misgiving.<sup>47</sup>

A classical example of poetic exaggeration is Kalhana's account of the ancient capital city of Srinagari, identified by Stein and Cunnigham as the present-day Pandrethan, built by Ashoka.<sup>48</sup> He paints a picture of the city outside the realms of reality: "That illustrious king built the town of Srinagari, which was most important on account of its ninety-six lakhs of houses resplendent with wealth."<sup>49</sup> Pandrethan, it may be recalled, is a locality 7 kilometres to the southeast of today's Srinagar city. It is a narrow and small strip of land sandwiched between mount Beswan and River Jhelum. The area is barely enough to accommodate a thousand odd houses.<sup>50</sup> The account of Kalhana that there were "ninety-six lakh houses resplendent with wealth" is a clear case of imagination running amuck. In the words of Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din:

It is incredible that this locality could hold a population of 3,84,00,000 (Thirty-eight million, four hundred thousand) souls, if we reckon that each house was occupied by just one couple and their two children. Even if we include comparatively vast areas from Badami Bagh on one side and Sempora and Pherstabal on the other, together with the villages, Khrew and Zewan, it would not be possible to create such a city as huge as mentioned by Kalhana.<sup>51</sup>

Despite having evolved enormously in terms of settlements and population since the times of Kalhana or, importantly, Ashoka, the total households in Srinagar city even today are about 239,570 with a population of 1,147,630.<sup>52</sup> Pertinently, the present city is larger in

area by many orders of magnitude than what the ancient Srinagari of Ashoka had been.

The population of the ancient city is not the sole example of the spread of Kalhana's poetic embroidery. He has indulged in such overstatements quite often. The numbers he quotes to describe historical events are simply out of this world. Take, for instance, the figure of three crore women that he says Mihirakula slaughtered together with their husbands, brothers and sons. The story Kalhana weaves around this supposed incident is that Mihirakula was diverting the course of River Candrakulya when a rock in the middle, which could not be moved, impeded the work. The king performed a penance and was informed in the dream that a powerful *yaksa* who observed the vow of chastity lived in the rock and if a chaste woman was to touch it, the obstruction would be removed. The attempts of every woman of good birth failed, and ultimately a potter's wife achieved the feat. This infuriated the king, and in anger he "slaughtered three crore women of respectable birth, together with their husbands, brothers and sons."<sup>53</sup> Assuming that each killed woman had only one husband, one brother and one son, the number of slaughtered people comes to an unthinkable figure of 120 million.

Kalhana, as we observe, is quite liberal with figures. One is tempted to quote this instance as yet another representative of this peculiarity. It is about king Samkaravarman (883–902 AD) whose advance-guard of army he counts as "nine lakh foot-soldiers, three hundred elephants and a lakh of horsemen."<sup>54</sup> While we have no source to determine the actual population of Kashmir in the 9th century AD or any written or oral evidence to suggest a massive natural calamity claiming millions of people in between, the total population of the Valley as enumerated through "the first accurate census,"<sup>55</sup> conducted a millennium later in 1891 AD, was 814,241, far less than Samkaravarman's soldiers.

Mythology, apart from the versifier's imagination, has reduced a considerable portion of the *Rajatarangini* into fantasy tales or children's bed-time stories. As an able craftsman, he has weaved these fables into the larger text. His craftsmanship is at display from the story of the origin of Kashmir itself. Characters such as Sri Krishna, Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva and others from the Hindu epics frequently appear on the scene. We are told that Kashmir was a vast lake in whose

waters lived the *Nagas*, the serpent deities of the lake, who, from the depths of the lake, once heard cries of a newborn baby floating on a lotus leaf. They adopted the child and gave him the name *Jalodbhava* (water-born). When he grew up he started devouring people living on the periphery of the lake and soon the place became desolate. The serpent deities invoked gods who ultimately killed *Jalodbhava*, and one of them, Ananta, broke the mountain with his plough draining the water of the lake upon which 'Kasmira' came into being. King Jayendra's adviser, Samdhimati, was resurrected and ascended the throne after having been executed by the king for allegedly eyeing his throne. King Lalitaditya, when led into an ocean of sand by a deceitful minister of another ruler and faced with an unsure situation with his exhausted and thirsty soldiers, struck the sand with his lance and a stream gushed forth in the desert to quench his and his soldiers' thirst. King Meghavahana in his expedition of Lanka plunged into the foaming ocean and the waters parted, and he, smiling at his troops' astonishment, beckoned them to follow him. In this wondrous manner, Meghavahana reached Lanka and won over its king, Vibhishana.<sup>56</sup>

A determined king plunging into an ocean or a brimming river and the waters parting to pave way for him seems to be Kalhana's favourite theme. Apart from Meghavahana, there is a curious incident he presents from the period of Lalitaditya which appears to have been taken straight from the life and times of a Prophet of Israel. We are told that Lalitaditya had collected a number of wise men around him. Of these, Cankuna once used a charm on the turbulent waters of a river of the Punjab, causing the waters to separate and leave a clear path in the middle for the army to cross.<sup>57</sup> "One wonders whether an echo of the story of Moses and the Red Sea had found its way to Kashmir."<sup>58</sup> The Bible and the Qur'an both adequately refer to this miracle taking place during the Prophethood of Moses.<sup>59</sup> Obviously, Kalhana funds his poetic imagination with religious literature, no matter where it came from. Many such fables taken out of the *Rajatarangini* have been published by the Children's Book Trust<sup>60</sup> for its natural readers—the children.

The journey of Kalhana's work from the time of its composition in the 12th century AD to our times is the journey of a masterpiece from a *kavya* to the most quoted source of Kashmir's 'history'.

This transition can be credited to such people in whose hands it fell after the versifier's death. They were "either less intelligent (and through their writing we know that they were so) or gullible, and they, ignoring its artistic excellence, began to call it 'the history of the kings of Kashmir'"<sup>61</sup> rather than what Kalhana had named it as—*Rajatarangini* (The River of Kings). "This woeful process of misinterpreting a great creative work started (perhaps) with *Jonaraja* and was carried through the centuries to the present, when Dr Stein took upon himself the white man's burden of interpreting for us the writings of one of our own authors."<sup>62</sup>

After the *Rajatarangini*, there existed no chronicle for over two hundred years until Jonaraja, the 14th century versifier, constructed a narrative to his own times. Non-existence of a parallel account for such a long interlude bestowed upon the *Rajatarangini* the status of an unrivalled source of history. Akhtar Mohiuddin observes:

In the absence of any positive evidence to the contrary, these Sanskrit works [*Nilamata Purana* and *Rajatarangini*] began to be taken as the source material for our history, if not the actual history, and thus an orbit was marked within which the researchers had to work in order to construct the history of Kashmir.<sup>63</sup>

In composing the *Rajatarangini*, was Kalhana's aim actually to document the history of Kashmir from ancient times to his own, or was he only writing a long poem with a specific premise? This question cannot be summarily dismissed. Kalhana, as we know, composed a *kavya* with the theme that time is the all-conquering power, and that man is governed by destiny. Akhtar Mohiuddin has a question: If Kalhana wanted to write a *kavya* just to put forth his theme, why did he choose kings and queens, some of them real, as his characters, and why did he assert that he had consulted earlier documents for the authenticity of his narrative? Akhtar then answers it himself:

Any creative writer of whatever caliber knows that the choice of characters in a creative piece is always determined by the theme. In the present case, the theme that time was the all-conquering power would in no way be presented but through the kings, who were on the mundane plane, the only conquerors

during the feudal age and in whose hands lay this worldly destiny of multitudes and countries. And since Kalhana was a great writer, he knew how to achieve credibility and how to make the narrative realistic 'by alluding to sources', and by using the names of some of the real kings and queens.<sup>64</sup>

As with the case of the *Nilamata Purana* and other Sanskrit works which suffered interpolation and distortion, the *Rajatarangini* too did not escape textual interference at the hands of those who attempted to either interpret it or use it as the basic source material. "We see, therefore, throughout the past centuries and particularly in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, almost all historians putting forth their views about the origin of the people of Kashmir within this narrow orbit."<sup>65</sup> Scholars generally agree that Kalhana had as his source material oral and written evidence about his immediate preceding period. They are ready to vouch for the authenticity of his narrative only after 7th–8th century AD. No such undertaking is forthcoming from any quarter for the period preceding the 7th century AD, not the least for 3,000 years preceding his own time. Doubts about this period are created by Kalhana himself by alluding to the powers of his 'mind's eye' and 'divine intuition' that he commissions to compose his work.

Notwithstanding this, the *Rajatarangini* has become the pivot of a narrative built and zealously guarded by people who subscribe to Kashmir's mythological origin. Among other elements, the works of Jonaraja and Srivara helped in adding to this narrative and to the assertion that the advent of Islam in Kashmir saw forcible conversion and persecution of Hindus. The *Rajatarangini* turned into the bedrock of historiography in Kashmir. As goes the famous Persian couplet: *Khisht-i-awwal chu nehad memaar kaj, Taa surayya mee rawad dewaar kaj* (If a mason puts the first brick at an angle, the wall, even if raised up to the Pleiad, is bound to come up oblique), the succeeding chroniclers, overawed by Kalhana's mastery over the language, took his work as sacred word and on it built further Kashmir's history. In the case of his immediate successors, the conflict between their scholarship and religious interests saw the fiction of Kalhana added up with impious bias, the worst victim of which was the 14th century ruler of Kashmir, Sikandar.

## Notes and References

1. *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 52; Book VIII, Verse 3404; Lokak 4224 is converted into 1148–49 AD by Thakur Achhar Singh Shahpuria, the Urdu translator of *Rajatarangini*.
2. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book VI, Verse 316.
3. Ibid., Book VII, Verse 1586.
4. Ibid., Book VII, Verse 1591.
5. Shahpuria, *Rajatarangini*, I: 8.
6. *Rajatarangini*, Book 7, Verse 1097.
7. The first Persian edition of the *Rajatarangini* was done by Zainul Aabideen's court historian, Mulla Ahmad.
8. These include the 17th, 18th and 19th century chronicles like *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir* and *Tarikh-i-Hassan*.
9. M. A. Stein's translation represents Orientalist categorization while Ranjit Pandit's translation represents Nationalist categorization.
10. Zutshi, "Translating the Past".
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book V, Verse 206.
15. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 52.
16. Ibid., Book VIII, Vol. II, Verse 3404.
17. Ibid., Book I, Verse 16.
18. Ibid., II: 377.
19. Ibid., I: 24.
20. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 180.
21. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 27.
22. Ibid., 24.
23. Ibid.
24. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 11.
25. Ibid., Verse 12.
26. Ibid., Verse 13.
27. Shahpuria *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, 95. Professor Buhler has established that Manakh compiled this poem few years before Kalhana wrote his *Rajatarangini* (94).
28. Ibid., 96. Manakh identifies Alak Dat as a benefactor of Kalhana (Ibid.).
29. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 4.
30. Ibid., Verse 5.
31. Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 12.
32. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 31.
33. Lawrence, *Kashmir and Jammu*, 21.
34. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 56.
35. Zutshi, "Translating the Past."

36. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I, 69.
37. Ibid.
38. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*, 42.
39. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, 31.
40. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, 163.
41. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, 32.
42. Ibid., Book I, Verse 70–72.
43. Ibid., Verse 35.
44. Ibid., Verse 37.
45. Ibid., Verse 250–60.
46. Ibid., Verse 167.
47. Ibid., 28.
48. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, 19 fn.
49. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 104.
50. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 43. It is not Kalhana only who exaggerates about the number of houses in a settlement. Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq, who 'discovered' the 35 kings missing from ancient histories of Kashmir including in the *Rajatarangini*, credits king Ramdev with "building the city of Babul over the Pattan plateau" in north Kashmir, by constructing "eleven lakh houses". (Shahpuria, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, 30.)
51. Ibid.
52. As per the census of 2011.
53. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 322.
54. Ibid., Book V, Verse 143–44.
55. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 224.
56. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*, 42.
57. *Rajatarangini*, Book IV, verse 248–51.
58. Thapar, *Historians of Medieval India*, 57.
59. Bible, stanza 14, verse 21, "Moses now stretched his hand out over the sea and Jehovah began making the sea go back by strong east wind all night long and converting the sea basin into the ground and the waters were being split apart. At length the sons of Israel went through the midst of the season dry land while the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left"; Qur'an, chapter 2, verse 50, "And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people within your very sight."
60. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*.
61. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 4.
62. Ibid., 4–5.
63. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 5–6.
64. Ibid., 5.
65. Ibid., 6.



## Chapter Three

# Malice

Sultan Sikandar (1389–1413 AD), the sixth ruler of the Shah Mir Dynasty, is accused of wanton destruction of temples and persecution of Hindu subjects. His image as a monstrous character out to destruct all noble structures representing Hindu deities has been handed down to us by a succession of chroniclers, beginning from a Sanskrit versifier of his own times. The amount of censure Sikandar has received at the hands of historians makes Aurangzeb, the 17th century Mughal ruler of India who was also persecuted by historians, look like a saint.

Sikandar ascended the throne at the age of 8 years. His mother, Haura, firmly dealt with opposition to the minor king and even put to death her own daughter and son-in-law to stem rebellion. His rule is distinguished by the strong momentum the spread of Islam received in Kashmir. He is the first and only Muslim ruler of Kashmir who introduced *Shariah* in governance. In his private life, he abstained from wine and other intoxicants and, on religious grounds, did not listen to music.<sup>1</sup>

After attaining adulthood, the king engaged in many activities of state-building. He was successfully involved in military expeditions such as the invasion of North-West India and subduing of Ohind.<sup>2</sup> He tactfully dealt with the treachery of his minister, Rai Magre, who poisoned to death his brother, and exhibited great diplomatic skills in successfully averting the looming threat of the rampaging Timur's march into the country. He was an able, generous and brave ruler and looked after the welfare of his subjects. He put an end to many oppressive taxes<sup>3</sup> and quelled revolts following which a period of peace ensued.<sup>4</sup>

Sikandar was liberal in patronizing learning that drew scholars from various parts of Asia. He established schools for the education of boys, and founded hospitals where medicine and food were supplied for free.<sup>5</sup> He had a passion for buildings and constructed many

a mosque, hospice and madrasa. The Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque), the Khanqah-i-Mualla (Glorious Hospice) and hospices at Tral, Wachi and Mattan in south Kashmir are some of the buildings erected by him. He founded the town of Sikandarpur and built a magnificent palace there. He laid the foundation of *Idgah* at Srinagar. However, he is not known in history for these contributions. Instead, he has been written about as a heartless ruler indulging, day in and day out, in plunder of temples and oppression of his Hindu subjects.

Singling out Sikandar for alleged destruction of temples and excesses committed against Hindu subjects is an intellectual dishonesty that a series of our chroniclers have committed. Strangely, the worst iconoclasts that Kashmir has produced belonged to the Hindu community itself. Kings such as Jayapida (764–95 AD), Samkaravarman (883–902 AD), Abhimanyu II (958–72 AD), Harsha (1089–1101 AD) and Rajadeva (1213–36 AD) outrageously indulged in sacrilege of idols, temples and persecution of Brahmans. Jayapida caused 99 Brahmans seek death in water by drowning after confiscating their land at Tulamulla.<sup>6</sup> Samkaravarman appalled his subjects by fiscal oppression and plundering of temples.<sup>7</sup> He destroyed the town and temples of Parihaspura to build his town and temples of Samkarapura (now Pattan) in order to perpetuate his memory. Abhimanyu II set his capital on fire and destroyed all the noble buildings from the temple of Vardhana Swami to as far as Bhikshukiparaka.<sup>8</sup> Rajadeva persecuted Brahmans to the extent that in order to escape persecution they would cry, “I am not a *Bhatta* (Kashmiri Brahman).”<sup>9</sup>

What about Harsha, the father of iconoclasts? Let us hear from Kalhana:

Then the greedy-minded [king] plundered from all temples the wonderful treasures which former kings had bestowed there. In order to get hold of statues of gods, too, when the treasures [of temples] had been carried off, he appointed Udayaraja ‘perfect for the overthrow of divine images.’ In order to defile the statues of gods he had excrements and urine poured over their faces by naked mendicants whose noses, feet and hands had rotted away. Divine images made of gold, silver and other [materials] rolled about even on the roads, which were covered with night soil, as [if they were] logs of wood. Crippled naked

mendicants and the like covered the images of the gods, which were dragged along by ropes round their ankles, with spitting instead of flowers. There was not even one temple in a village, town or in the City which was not despoiled of its image by that *Turuska*, King Harsa.<sup>10</sup>

A couple of hundred verses down the line, Kalhana describes the breaking of the image of Visnu by Harsha at Parihaspura thus:

The king broke up and removed the glorious [image of Visnu] Parihasakesava which [Uccala], though quite destitute of means in the midst of that [famine], had preserved when he had it in his power.<sup>11</sup>

The successors of Kalhana who took his work forward spared all these kings for the worst kind of iconoclasm and persecution but singled out Sikandar on the basis of 'testimony' of a contemporary versifier who, as we shall see ahead in this book, could have other reasons to malign the King than the one he nailed him for. "Jonaraja's account of the worst excesses of the most zealous Muslim ruler was merely an echo of Kalhana's description of Harsha, 'a demon descended to destroy this land hallowed by gods, tirthas and rishis'."<sup>12</sup>

Did Sikandar really deserve the label of an iconoclast and oppressor of Hindus?

Before deliberating on this subject let us go back into history and look at the period and the state of affairs of Kashmir prior to the time Sikandar ascended the throne.

Ahead of passing from a falling Hindu rule to a rising Muslim reign in the 14th century, Kashmir was torn by social disorder, crumbling governance and low morals of people. The elite, both in administration and religious affairs, were fattening on the flesh of the masses crushed under an unjust social order. Both Kalhana and Ksemendra point out extreme depravity prevalent among *Shaiva* gurus (in Chapter 4). The difference between vice and virtue was blurred. Jayalal Kaul narrates the prevailing widespread lawlessness thus:

Kings rose and fell in quick succession; the court was continually rocked by intrigue and assassinations and the country by internecine feuds; the feudal lords the Damaras

and Lavanyas, addicted to arson and pillage, rose in revolt at the least provocation; there were numerous instances of kings and queens morbidly sensuous, cruel and oppressive; the Kayastha bureaucracy, corrupt and influential, opposed strong measures to suppress maladministration; even the *Brahmins* undertook *prayopavesana* (hunger strike) against several kings for their selfish caste interests; and some Hindu kings 'more wicked than sin', pillaged and plundered the temples and *mathas* (monasteries), and set fire to them, seizing and melting the gold and silver images of gods and goddesses. As a result of this people suffered greatly from the resultant anarchical conditions, heavy burden of taxation, rapacity of the feudal landlords and continual raids into the Valley by chieftains of the surrounding areas.<sup>13</sup>

The transformation of Kashmir from a Hindu kingdom to a mass Muslim society was not a sudden development but "a long drawn out process spreading over at least three hundred years during which momentous political, religious and cultural developments took place, marking off its different phases from one another."<sup>14</sup> The development was made into a controversy by the Brahman chroniclers beginning with Jonaraja. They accused Muslim kings, primarily Sikandar, of persecution and forcible mass conversion of their Hindu subjects and putting to death those who refused to change their faith. The originator had his own reasons to make this allegation, as we will examine further. The accusation was taken up and magnified by successive Brahman chroniclers by propagating what was heard rather than observed in contemporary sources. These Brahman chroniclers ignored absolute and obvious facts and circulated the community legend of forcible conversion. Among them, Anand Koul, writing at the close of the first quarter of the 20th century, paints a dramatic picture of the plight of the 'sons of Avantivarma and Lalitaditya and the progeny of the blessed Rishis':<sup>15</sup>

It was neck or nothing with them in order to save their own religion. Hundreds were put to sword, thousands were flung into the rivers and lakes or killed in their homes. With indomitable courage, both physical and moral, they faced death at the hands of the 'Deputies of God'.

These 'historians and non-historians', coming as they did from a traditionally literate community, were the first to disseminate their community's point of view and seed it in the writings of the 19th–20th century European authors and travellers writing on Kashmir. In demonizing the Muslim rulers, their creative abilities invented new atrocities on Kashmiri Hindus that the contemporary Brahman scribes had not observed. Intelligently enough, they put under wraps developments that would blow up their hypothesis. Accordingly, they do not let us have a view of the Muslim rulers loosening their belts to coexist with certain un-Islamic practices or not imposing taxes such as *jazya* and cremation tax. They do not tell us also about the Muslim rulers extending official patronage to the development of Sanskrit<sup>16</sup> and Sultan Shihab-ud-Din refusing to melt the metal images of Hindu gods for converting them into coins when his Hindu minister, Udayashri, advised him this to overcome financial difficulties.<sup>17</sup> The king whom the *Baharistan-i-Shahi* accuses of idol breaking, in fact, installed 18 lined stone inscriptions in Sharda script containing his invocation to Hindu god, Ganesha, besides constructing *dharmamatha* and repairing dilapidated temples of antiquity.<sup>18</sup> They even ignored the inconsistency in Jonaraja's narrative about Sikandar's role as an iconoclast. At one time, the versifier accuses the king of wanton destruction of temples and at other time, it is his neo-convert Prime Minister Suhabhata (who took the Muslim name of Malik Saif-ud-Din) whom he squarely holds responsible for the crime.

Jonaraja gives us an idea about the characters, identified by him as 'leaders of the army', allegedly involved in the destruction of temples and persecution of Hindus.<sup>19</sup> They were the heads of the dominant and powerful landlord tribes whom Kalhana had identified by the general term Damaras<sup>20</sup> and who, like Suhabhata, did not belong to the Brahman caste.<sup>21</sup> The political chaos created by them was responsible for quick enthronement and dethronement of rulers from the 8th century AD onwards.<sup>22</sup> No ruler could govern without the support of the Damaras whom the Brahmans derogatorily called *dasyu* or robbers. Historically, the Brahmans and the Damaras were always at loggerheads, exercising, as both were, huge power and influence to pressurize the ruler to subordinate the state to their personal interests. The clash of their interests caused perpetual animosity between the two

with each busy in seeing the other down. Their mutual antagonism travelled through the Hindu period to the Muslim period when the Damaras and the Brahmans found themselves in opposite religious camps. Suhabhatta as a neo-Muslim Prime Minister of Sikandar is believed to have avenged the animosity the Brahmans had towards the Damaras and, according to Jonaraja, instigated the King to destroy the images of gods.<sup>23</sup> The persecution of Hindus that Suhabhatta, and through him Sikandar, is accused of, has political rivalry behind it rather than any religious bigotry.

There is no mention in Jonaraja's work about the Kashmiri Hindus given the option of 'death, conversion or exile' or only 'eleven families of Brahmans' surviving the alleged persecution and forced conversion. Yet, a 20th century Brahman writer invents this charge as a historical occurrence.<sup>24</sup> According to Professor Wani, these myths were woven to alter the history to meet the community demands.<sup>25</sup> Jonaraja contradicts his own premise on forced conversion by alluding to the Brahmans agreeing to pay *jazya* instead of embracing Islam and many Brahmans and other castes embracing Islam for obtaining favour of the King.<sup>26</sup>

The spread of Islam in Kashmir was neither a sudden nor a quick development. It took about three centuries to turn into a Muslim majority land. The presence of Muslims in the Valley goes back to the 8th century AD.<sup>27</sup> We come across references to Muslims being in Kashmir during the period of Lalitaditya (725–53 AD), and we know of Muslim army commanders employed by Harsha (1089–1101 AD).<sup>28</sup> Jia Lal Kilam writes about Harsha reorganizing his army under the Muslim commanders and how it helped him. In his words:

Harsha enlisted Muslims and organised the army on a new model. Each group of hundred soldiers was placed under the charge of a Muslim commander thus making it impossible for his soldiers to hatch plots or run away from the battlefield. From Harsha's time onwards, the Muslims as a class appeared in the political field. For long did they keep themselves allied with the rulers of the country and helped them in maintaining themselves on their tottering thrones. Their fighting qualities and the royal patronage made the Muslims a powerful factor in the body-politic. But it took them another two centuries before they became the masters of the country.<sup>29</sup>

Bikhshachara (1111–1228 AD) organized a cavalry force manned mainly by the Muslims.<sup>30</sup> About 300 years before the Sultanate, we find Muslims occupying high positions in the army.<sup>31</sup> “Significantly enough, both the non-local and local sources allude to the pouring of Muslims into Kashmir from the eighth century itself.”<sup>32</sup> An Arab commander in the service of Raja Dahir (d 710) sought refuge in Kashmir in the 8th century where he was warmly received by Chandrapida, the ruler, and granted a town.<sup>33</sup> Kalhana writes about king Vajraditya (763–70 AD) who “sold many men to the *mlecchas* and introduced in the country practices which befitted *mlecchas*.”<sup>34</sup> These *mlecchas* were the Muslim adventurers, fortune seekers and traders from Sind and Multan where they had been ruling for more than half a century. By Kalhana’s account, Islamic practices were in vogue in Kashmir as early as in the 8th century AD. Mansur al-Hallaj came to Kashmir in 895 AD, stayed here for about a year and engaged in religious debates.<sup>35</sup> As early as the 11th century AD, there were many Muslim soldiers employed in the army of Hindu rulers of Kashmir. Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani presents the scenario thus:

The employment of ‘hundreds of Muslim captains’ in the armies of the Kashmiri kings at the turn of the eleventh century alludes to the presence of a sizeable Muslim population in Kashmir more than two hundred years before the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate. It is quite natural to presume that these Muslim captains would have either brought their families along with them or married local girls, both pointing to the presence of a larger Muslim population in Kashmir than is adumbrated in Kalhana’s *Rajatarangini*. As these Muslims belonged to a different religion and culture, it is tempting to infer that these settlers would have brought with them different professionals to cater to their daily needs.<sup>36</sup>

Instances of Muslim immigrants bringing their families and relations with them or of matrimonial relations between Hindu and Muslim nobles during the period are attested by Jonaraja.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the 11th century narrator Ksemendra mentions the presence of Muslim singers<sup>38</sup> (*manqib khawans* and *fadayil khawans* singing praises of Allah) in Kashmir, while Kalhana reports the Lavanya nobles of

Kashmir fleeing to escape Harsha's oppression and eating "cow's meat in the lands of the *mlecchas*."<sup>39</sup> Kalhana presents testimony of the "profound Islamic influence"<sup>40</sup> of this contact when he feels constrained to use Sanskritized Persian terms in his narrative that he composed in his favourite *devabhasha*.<sup>41</sup> The 13th century Italian merchant traveller Marco Polo informs us about the presence of a section of Muslims who worked as butchers for Hindus of Kashmir and lived among them.<sup>42</sup> This section of population was either immigrant Muslims or among the first local converts. These developments confirm the close contact existing between local Hindu population and Muslims within and outside Kashmir. By the time the Muslim Sultanate was established, trickling of Muslims into Kashmir had continued. Among the arrivals was Shamsuddin Shah Mir, later a minister in the court of Kota Rani, who eventually established the Muslim Sultanate in 1339. Professor Wani is of the view that since the Hindu rulers greatly depended on their Muslim commanders and the neighbouring Muslim rulers, Islam did not encounter a hostile political climate in Kashmir.<sup>43</sup>

The favourable political climate attracted prominent Muslim preachers such as Syed Sharfuddin or Bulbul Shah, Syed Hussain Simnani, Syed Tajuddin, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and his son Mir Muhammad Hamdani from Central Asian cities, apart from hundreds of their disciples who introduced local population to the teachings of Islam and earned their conversion. Among the first converts was the Buddhist ruler of Kashmir, Rinchana, who embraced Islam at the hands of Bulbul Shah after having thorough discussions with religious divines of different faiths.<sup>44</sup> The conversion of the ruler had a positive effect on the spread of Islam. Kalhana's *mlecchas* had now graduated to the status of rulers. Jonaraja pulls out a fabrication that Rinchana was refused entry into Hinduism as he was found unworthy of initiation into the religion for being a Buddhist,<sup>45</sup> as if persecuted Buddhist masses were not forcibly converted to Hinduism during and after the 6th century, à la Mihirakula. The process of conversion of Kashmiri Hindus to Islam had begun three centuries before the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate climaxed by the end of the 15th century or early 16th century when "the writ of Islam ran large in Kashmir."<sup>46</sup>

The conversion of Rinchana, who assumed the Muslim name of Sadrudin, did not establish Muslim rule in Kashmir. In fact, after



his death in 1323 AD, Kashmir reverted to Hindu rule for the next 26 years when ultimately Shamsuddin Shah Mir deposed Kota Rani and declared himself the king. Although Shah Mir's ascendancy to the throne marked the beginning of the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir, yet Islam was still nowhere near being the guiding force for governance. In fact, un-Islamic traditions still ruled supreme as late as up to the period of Qutubuddin (1373–89 AD), the fifth ruler of the Shah Mir Dynasty. Islamic spirit in the life of the ruler and in governance was far from being visible. Qutubuddin had simultaneously taken two sisters in marriage,<sup>47</sup> an out-and-out unlawful and abhorred act in Islam. He would also daily visit a temple in the morning.<sup>48</sup> The most significant event that happened during his reign was the arrival of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani, reverentially called *Amir-e-Kabir* and *Shah-i-Hamdan* by Kashmiris. He transformed the country's social and religious landscape through his preaching, resulting in people embracing Islam in large numbers. It was he who pointed out to the King the immorality in being simultaneously wedded to two sisters upon which he divorced both and remarried one of them.<sup>49</sup> Qutubuddin was succeeded by his son, Sikandar.

By the time Sikandar ascended the throne, Mir Saiyid Ali had gone back and Mir Muhammad Hamdani had arrived in Kashmir to consolidate his father's mission. During Sikandar's reign, a Sanskrit versifier, Jonaraja, happened to be a witness to the happenings in Kashmir. He was later commissioned by Sikandar's son, King Zainul Aabideen, to record the history of Kashmir from where Kalhana had left it. Thus, he became the first scribe to have recorded the rule of Sikandar. Jonaraja was a contemporary of Sikandar, Ali Shah and Zainul Aabideen, the three Muslim rulers of the 14th and 15th century Kashmir. His pupil, Srivara, waxes eloquent in praise of his teacher and places him at the highest pedestal. Through him, we come to know that Jonaraja was the leader of the circle of Brahmanas with countless merits, who had mastered the sense of the Vedas and the codes of law, who was engaged in the performance of daily ablutions and prayers and when in the royal court, looked like Brihaspati.<sup>50</sup> Jonaraja was a staunch Brahman who considered his caste as "props of the universe."<sup>51</sup> He appeared to have been very proud of his scholarship which is amply manifested by his being always "accompanied by a large body of followers."<sup>52</sup>

A proud Brahman as Jonaraja was, he was obviously not at ease with the developments that shook the belief system which he invested in and a new faith rapidly taking root. A large section of Hindu society had renounced its religion and converted to Islam, thereby disassociating itself from what Jonaraja pompously represented. His annoyance at a far-reaching development that unseated his religion both from the hearts of his own brethren and governance could be well imagined. However, he does not seem to be so annoyed with Sikandar's immediate predecessors such as Qutubuddin, Shahabuddin, Alauddin, Jamshed or Shamsuddin as he appears to be with him. It is important to bear in mind that during their time although the political power was transferred from Hindu rulers to the Muslim Sultanate, Islam as religion, as noted earlier, was still far from being an influence, let alone, guiding force for governance. So long as this was the case, Jonaraja seemed to have no qualms with these Muslim rulers. The ascendancy of Sikandar, however, changed this scenario.

Sikandar's association with Mir Muhammad Hamdani influenced him to introduce Islam, in its puritan form, into the lives of his Muslim subjects and matters of governance. He banned all anti-Islamic activities such as drinking, music, gambling and dancing of women and administered the country according to the *Shariah*.<sup>53</sup> He was just, honest and an able ruler who ruled firmly unlike most of his predecessors. The new situation had put a staunch Brahman, Jonaraja, at odds with it all and the ruler who brought it about. He appears filled with anger and contempt at a level where he curses Sikandar like a typical wailing widow and writes about his death as having gone "to hell on account of the curse of a Brahmana."<sup>54</sup>

Jonaraja had already failed the test of being an unbiased historian when he completely ignored to mention Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani's arrival or his colossal work in Kashmir. With equal brazenness, one might say, he does not mention the construction of the Jama Masjid, a far reaching cultural and religious development taking place in the heart of Kashmir during his own time. The construction of the Grand Mosque was started by Sikandar against whom he nurses a grudge but was completed by Zainul Aabideen whom he deifies and calls Narayana incarnate, like other Sanskrit writers of the time who

raised him to the status of god in return of encouragement by the King.<sup>55</sup> Jonaraja records with adulation other constructions such as bridges, Zaina Laank and palaces constructed by Zainul Aabideen, but intentionally avoids a mention of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and the Jama Masjid. Additionally, he seems to ignore anybody or anything related to Islam. We do not find any mention in his narrative of prominent Muslim saints, nobles or army commanders even during the time of his adored Zainul Aabideen. The most revered saint of Kashmir till this day, Sheikh Nooruddin, who lived in his time, too is ignored. So is his senior contemporary, Lal Ded. The two legendary figures have ruled the cultural milieu of Kashmir, and such profound influences are impossible to miss a mention in any contemporary narration unless wilfully done. Similarly, one of the most sacred Muslim shrines of Kashmir, the Khanqah-i-Mualla, constructed by Sikandar, too does not merit a mention by Jonaraja. We have already observed that while he himself lived through the reign of three Muslim rulers, he does not mention the word Muslim in his narrative unlike his contemporary, Lal Ded, in her verse. The prejudice against Islam becomes more emphatic when Jonaraja talks about the arrival of *saiyyads* (Muslim preachers) under Mir Muhammad Hamdani and Sheikh Jalaluddin Bukhari in an extremely contemptuous expression as "locusts in a paddy field."<sup>56</sup> He is not even ready to believe that a Muslim ruler can do any good to his subjects when he writes about Shah Mir, "Strange that this believer in Alla [Allah] became the saviour of the people."<sup>57</sup> Or look at his scorn for Islam when he describes conversion of local population as "polluting the caste of the people."<sup>58</sup> At the personal level, Jonaraja's dislike for Sikandar could also be explained by the fact that much as the chronicler considered himself as a great scholar or his disciples revered him as a Brahman of "countless merits,"<sup>59</sup> he could not invoke his patronage. A person of his ego must have felt hurt by the king's indifference which, among other things, may have weighed heavily on his assessment of Sikandar. In contrast, Zainul Aabideen not only made him the court scribe but also patronized him. Jonaraja more than pays him back in his eulogy as the ruler of Kashmir in whom he saw no wrong and whom he adored as a Narayana incarnate.

Sikandar became an object of hatred and bias of the chroniclers for reasons other than genuine. He was accused of widespread destruction of temples and persecution of Hindus. His detractors saw him standing behind every ruined temple. In fact, Jonaraja describes him as breaking temples "day and night,"<sup>60</sup> as if he would attend to no other business of the state. The allegation of iconoclasm against Sikandar, started by Jonaraja, touched such absurd levels that he was condemned for destroying temples which are historically established to have been plundered before he was even born. A typical case is the temple of Parihasapura where a copper plate with Sanskrit inscription was allegedly discovered which 'predicts' the destruction of this temple "after the lapse of eleven hundred years by one Sikandar."<sup>61</sup> Clearly, the author of the prophecy had no regard for historiography. Parihasapura was founded about 650 years before Sikandar was born and plundered about 500 years before the alleged iconoclast lived, by Samkaravarman who "had whatever was of value at *Parihasapura*, carried off in order to raise the fame of his own city."<sup>62</sup>

The amusing aspect of prophesying temple destruction by Sikandar does not stop with Parihasapura, a town in north Kashmir. It travelled as far as Bijbihara in south Kashmir. Stein notes:

Exactly the same tradition is now current among the Purohitas of Vijabror about the destruction of the *Vijayesvara* image. This alleged inscription is said to have run as: *Ekadasa asatam varsam Sikendara amahala bismilla iti mantrena nasyante Vijayesvarah*.

The curious Sanskrit of this doggerel is an indication that its author may probably have belonged himself to the noble guild of Bachbattas.<sup>63</sup>

The invented 'prophecies' about Sikandar destroying temples do not end there. There is this later day story about a wicked Brahman living in Mattan, a village in south Kashmir, who had illicit relations with his sister-in-law and wanted to atone his sin. He went to a guru who told him that the only atonement he could make for his enormous crime was to offer himself as a burnt offering to god. The Brahman accepted the advice, ordered a pile of wood to be prepared and was burnt. Before consigning him to flames he was asked about his last wish, as was the belief of the people that whatever a person who

gives himself to burn on a pyre wishes is fulfilled by divine power. The Brahman answered, "I want you to give me some milk and some flesh." When the guru heard his reply, he became exceedingly sorrowful, and said to the people who crowded around the burning man: "O people, this man will become a Muhammedan king, who will destroy all our idols and cast all our shrines down to the ground." The prophecy, thus goes the story, was fulfilled and Sikandar "[was born who] destroyed all the Hindu temples and broke their idols into pieces; and when there remained not another temple for this monster to destroy, he determined to go to Amarnath and break up the sacred emblem of Shiva, which is there in a cave."<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, the story presents the 'worst iconoclast' as previously a Brahman of Mattan, a revered place for Kashmiri Pandits even today for the 8th century AD Sun Temple located there!

The Persian chroniclers succeeding Jonaraja appear to admire Sikandar's 'iconoclasm' with some sort of religious enthusiasm. It looks like a race among them to pin him down. While the Brahman historians and writers emulated Jonaraja and, in fact, generated more 'evidence' against Sikandar, some Muslim chroniclers like Saiyid Ali bin Saiyid Mohammad either unwittingly fell into this pothole of disinformation or in the misplaced belief eulogized the King for having done a great religious duty. It appears that "they have resorted to such descriptions for religious and communal considerations; to earn religious merit on the one hand, and to propagandize iconoclastic trend on the other."<sup>65</sup> The anonymous author of the *Baharistan-i-Shahi* extols Sikandar and Saif-ud-Din for, what he describes as, 'eradication of infidelity and other aberrant practices'. The following excerpt from the Persian text is illustrative of this admiration:

Sultan Sikandar and Malik Saif-ud-Din, God bless them both, joined hands to gear their full effort towards the eradication of infidelity and other aberrant practices. They raised the banner of Islam and the standard of the faith of the chosen among people to the highest pinnacle of glory and exaltation. Through the blessings and support of Islam and by the propagation of the commands of the *Shariah*, they were rewarded with victories wherever they led their armies, confirming the saying that 'God helps those who help Muhammad's religion'.<sup>66</sup>

The portrayal of Sikandar as a vicious iconoclast created a perception which sees no extant or non-extant temple, standing or dilapidated, in Kashmir whose demolition or desecration is not placed at his door. He is also accused of destroying temples where historically none existed. The case in point is the Kali Shri Mandir supposed to have existed at the site where the Khanqah-i-Mualla stands today. Significantly, none of the important Hindu chroniclers, whether preceding, contemporary or subsequent to Sikandar, including Kalhana, Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajaya Bhatt and Shuk Bhatt, have made any reference to the existence of any temple by this name at its supposed location or to its destruction by Sikandar.<sup>67</sup> Jonaraja who did not miss any opportunity to demonize Sikandar would not have spared him for such desecration. Yet the unfortunate King suffers the accusation even centuries after his death. Foreign authors who came to Kashmir during and after the 19th century too did not remain untouched by this historical fallacy. It shall have to be borne in mind that their link with the written and unwritten history of Kashmir was those native interpreters who had inherited hatred for Sikandar for allegedly converting a Hindu Kashmir into a Muslim Kashmir. Their grudge against the King naturally found way into the writings of these foreigners. Cunningham, after accusing Sikandar of worst iconoclasm when frustrated with the absence of substantial evidence against him, shifts the blame of destruction of temples in Kashmir to the equally maligned Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, saying that if it was not Sikandar then it must have been him—another iconoclast.<sup>68</sup> Some historians have stretched their imagination to the extent of accusing Sikandar of using gunpowder in the destruction of temples when it was not even known about in Kashmir, not to speak of its use.<sup>69</sup>

This bias on the part of chroniclers transferred Sikandar into public memory as a vicious iconoclast and a fierce persecutor of his Hindu subjects under whose hammer “gods proved stones, and the incantations meant to invoke divine protection were reduced to babble.”<sup>70</sup> The succeeding writers, without challenging the veracity of the accusation, carried forward the same image of the ruler. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, writer and political activist with a liberal Kashmiri Brahman image, too succumbs to the temptation of blasting Sikandar as being “the blackest spot on the bright history of Kashmir.”<sup>71</sup> Many

Hindu historians exaggerated his atrocities beyond limit and gave fullest liberty to their imagination.<sup>72</sup> Some Muslim chroniclers have gone a step ahead of their Hindu counterparts. While according to Jonaraja, Shahabuddin was not an iconoclast, the anonymous author of *Baharistan-i-Shahi* attributes to him also the destruction of idols.<sup>73</sup>

It would be interesting and of huge import to refer to personal observations made by two rulers of Kashmir much after Sikandar was gone from the scene. Mirza Haider Dughlat, who invaded and conquered Kashmir in 1531 AD, 117 years after Sikandar's demise, refers to more than 150 idol temples standing as "first and foremost among the wonders of Kashmir" built of blocks of hewn stone, fitted accurately one upon the other. "These stones have been so carefully placed in position, without plaster or mortar, that a sheet of paper could not be passed between the joints."<sup>74</sup> Or, take the testimony of the Mughal king, Jahangir (1605–27 AD), who wrote in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*:

The lofty idol temples which were built before the manifestations of Islam are still in existence, and are all built of stones which from foundation to roof are large and weigh 30 or 40 maunds placed one on the other.<sup>75</sup>

What 'day and night' vandalism of temples by Sikandar is Jonaraja and some of his fellow-chroniclers then talking about?

Sikandar has been accused of, and condemned for, wanton destruction of temples in Kashmir even as possibility of other factors like earthquakes being responsible for the collapse or damage of giant stone structures is altogether ignored. It is an established historical as well as geological fact that Kashmir has suffered in the past a number of severe earthquakes that have levelled its habitations. The Valley is in seismologic Zone V and sits on, what in geological terminology is called, an active tectonic setting where earthquakes are a common occurrence. Walter Lawrence talks about as many as "eleven great earthquakes" having occurred since the 15th century AD.<sup>76</sup> He was an eyewitness to the massive earthquake of 1885 and observed damages caused to the temples of Patan and the palace of Srinagar.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the history of devastating earthquakes in Kashmir goes back in time long before the 15th century AD. A recently published research

paper in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* refers to the history of great earthquakes in Kashmir thus:

[S]everal severe earthquakes have also been reported to have occurred in this region [NW-SE loop of the Hazara-Kashmir Syntaxis] in the preceding 1000 years, most notably in 1501, 1555, 1669, 1736, 1779, 1824, 1828 and 1885. Historical earthquake data reveals important information about their occurrence and felt area. The seismicity appears to have occurred in close space-and-time sequence; for example, the seismic events of 2082–2041 BCE, 844 CE, 1828 CE, 1863 CE, 1877 CE and 1885 CE had a marked tendency to cluster in northwest Kashmir Valley. Moreover, major advancements in understanding earthquakes were spurred by the occurrence of catastrophic seismic events like 1555 CE and 1885 CE that attracted the attention of contemporary scholars of the time. These earthquakes have caused destructive effects on natural and built environment.<sup>78</sup>

The paper suggests that most of the damage to Kashmir's stone temples was initiated by earthquakes. It identifies the loss of arches made of wedge-shaped blocks (keystone) and monolithic capstone roofs of temples as a common feature of these damaged structures.<sup>79</sup> It may be interesting for a reader to recall the observation of William Moorcroft after examining the ruined stone temples of Kashmir. The 19th century English explorer, who extensively travelled throughout the Himalayas, Tibet, Central Asia and Kashmir, speaking of these stone temples, makes the following observation:

It is scarcely possible to imagine that the state of ruin to which they have been reduced has been the work of time, or even of man, as their solidity is fully equal to that of the most massive monuments of Egypt. Earthquakes must have been the cause of their overthrow.<sup>80</sup>

The earthquake of October 2005, originating from an active (Bagh–Balakot) fault, could be a case in point to imagine the devastations earthquakes must have wrought on Kashmir in the past. The rising mountains surrounding the Kashmir Valley, the elevated karewas (wūdur in local parlance) and the courses of big and small streams



attest to the fact that the Kashmir Valley is deforming and must have seen, and will see, innumerable big and small earthquakes.<sup>81</sup> The earthquake studies have now started revealing the facts which historians either did not know or chose to ignore.

A recent study jointly conducted by an international team of geologists from the University of Colorado, USA, University of Kashmir and US Geological Survey is a watershed development in explaining the causes of damages suffered by ancient structures like temples in Kashmir. A research paper co-authored by Roger Bilham, Bikram Singh Bali, M. I. Bhat and Susan Hough and published in the Geological Society of America in its special issue of September 2010 talks about historical earthquakes in Kashmir in the light of the clues from the Shiva Temple at Pandrethan.<sup>82</sup> The study concludes that the displaced blocks of the temple, a 5.5 m<sup>2</sup> masonry block structure constructed ca. AD 920, visible in the earlier extant photographs of the shrine are the result of stronger shaking in the past.

The team surveyed many of the temples in Kashmir built between 750 and 950 AD, including Nara Nar, Vijayesvara, Awantisawmi, Martand and Pandrethan temples, and noticed that while most of these had many of the columns standing (some tilted), the most glaring was the loss of capstones in the roof in all cases, be it the massive Parihasapura temple or a relatively small one like Shiva temple at Pandrethan. Bhat refers to two photographs of the Pandrethan temple taken by Geologist R. D. Oldham and Jhon Burke, both from the United Kingdom, in 1887 AD and 1868 AD, respectively, and makes the following important observation:

For a casual observer the photographs do not resolve the vandalism issue. But for an expert, both the photographs contain a wealth of information. Other than vertical cracks in the temple structure, the photographs show clear differential horizontal displacement of stone blocks. Also, several stone blocks at higher levels remain misaligned. Fire may cause cracks but it cannot cause horizontal displacement of heavy stone blocks. Moreover, it would not have caused dismantling of capstones leaving decorated stone ceiling under the roof capstones unscathed and intact. Looking at the displaced blocks in terms of their position, we notice that the displaced blocks are at higher levels (in the roof part) and not at lower levels near

the pediment—a clear sign of shaking suffered by the temple. No amount of human force could have shaken such a strong and heavy structure. Rather, it is a known fact that during an earthquake a building shakes more, therefore, experiences more damage, at higher levels than at base.<sup>83</sup>

Bhat further observes:

In summary, the loss of capstones, horizontal displacement of still existing displaced stone blocks, and those that may have been repositioned in recent repairs, and vertical cracks together are the characteristic features that are known from other earthquake-damaged archaeological masonry buildings. The temple now has a tilt of 5°, which could either be earthquake-induced or, more likely, due to differential setting of the structure since it is constructed over unconsolidated sediments.

Pandrethan temple is not the only temple that bears such unmistakable and indisputable stamp of earthquake-induced damage. Each of the temples that we surveyed has lost capstones and suffered horizontal displacement and separation of stone blocks.<sup>84</sup>

The charge of forcible conversion of Kashmiri Hindus against Sikandar is difficult to stand for the fact that when he was gone and Zainul Aabideen, Jonaraja's Narayana incarnate, assumed power and played a benefactor to his Hindu subjects, the converts did not return to their original faith, even as the king is said to have offered incentives to people for returning to their previous faith if they were converted by force. Stein is compelled by historical evidence to believe that "Islam made its way into Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion, for which the influx of foreign adventurers both from the south and Central Asia had prepared the ground."<sup>85</sup>

Sikandar is also condemned for banning wine and *suttee*. These accusations cannot be used to demonize a king who wanted to eradicate evil practices from the society. Sufi argues:

On moral as well as humanitarian grounds, we cannot blame Sikandar for abolishing *Suttee*. As a matter of fact, he only forestalled Akbar and Bentinck in this respect. Sikandar cannot also be villified for attempting a dry Kashmir either.<sup>86</sup>

An extremely significant piece of evidence, that surfaced recently in the shape of a single-headed image of Brahma in a Srinagar temple, tears into shreds the allegation against Sikandar of being an iconoclast and a ruler who banned idol making. The image located by J. L. Bhan, the then incharge Director of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, in the Ganesh Mandir "is of considerable importance and pertains to the period ranging between 1389–1413 AD."<sup>87</sup> The image bears the inscription *Sri Sikandara saha reoye sangapati rahulya kastve-hkena tatha* in the Sharda script on its lower portion which establishes that it was installed during the time of Sikandar.<sup>88</sup> Added to this is the screaming evidence in the shape of the temple atop the Takht-e-Sulaiman or Shankaracharya hill and the Shiva temple at Pandrethan exonerating him of his alleged crime of iconoclasm. Could these two iconic temples in the heart of the capital city have escaped the hammer of the iconoclast if he had such a penchant for pulling down temples? With regard to the temple atop the hill, some chronicles<sup>89</sup> suggest that Sikandar did not break it in deference to Mehmood Ghazni having offered prayers here. However, Ghazni never set his foot on the soil of Kashmir. His troops had to return from the mountain passes owing to inclement weather and inaccessibility of the mountain barriers, despite defeating the army of king Samgramaraja (1003–28 AD).<sup>90</sup>

Jonaraja and Srivara were assigned the job of chronicling Kashmir by Zainul Aabideen. An important point that strikes the mind is whether the king could have eschewed his father's bad-mouthed description by Jonaraja. Zainul Aabideen did not live to see the chronicles completed. Jonaraja died before he had completed his own *Rajatarangini* and Srivara, who took over from him, completed the *Jainatarangini* about 20 years after the King had passed away. Obviously, either Jonaraja deliberately engaged in vilification of Sikandar, in which case, however, it has to be kept in mind that he had to submit his work to the king, or the text was tampered with after his demise as textual corruption was common with the Sanskrit texts of the past including the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Rajatarangini*. It is probable that Jonaraja's text has not passed on to us in its original form. Srikanth Koul, the translator of Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, alludes to contextual contradictions, interpolations, recessions and insertions in the text of the narrative.<sup>91</sup>

The bias against Sikandar has been religiously carried forward to the present times and his detractors leave no opportunity to whip his memory—whatever the occasion or subject. The following excerpt from an unrelated topic, Chinar, is a typical example:

Sultan Sikander ruled Kashmir and acquired notoriety as an idol breaker. He destroyed temples and shrines including those of Martand, Vijeshwari, and Sureshwari. After their destruction he built mosques over the razed ground. The Hindu shrines were associated with the plantings of 'Bouin' plane trees in Kashmir; those too must have been dealt with in the same way as temple structures.<sup>92</sup>

It is not difficult to observe malice and distortion packaged in this appalling piece of 'scholarship'. Neither the three temples mentioned in it were demolished by Sikandar nor were mosques built by him at their sites. The Martand temple is till this day a protected archaeological site maintained by the ASI and is a tourist attraction too. The Vijeshwar temple was visited by Sikandar's son and successor, Zainul Aabideen, during a pilgrimage when he was accompanied by his court historian Srivara.<sup>93</sup> The ruins of Sureshwar temple at Soura were observed by archaeologist Hanry Hardy Cole even as late as towards the end of the 19th century.<sup>94</sup>

Sikandar's image as passed on to us is of a person symbolizing violence against Hindus. In the community literature and oral tradition of Kashmiri Pandits, he lives as a persecutor and an iconoclast of the first rate. The Brahman historians and writers, sort of, turned into zealous archaeologists digging out ruins of temples destroyed by Sikandar, as if their scholarship solely depended on the number of such destroyed temples they discovered. Like the Kashmiri proverb, *Batas bata kawa bata* (One Pandit with another Pandit is like a mountain crow), meaning if one crow caws, the whole flock caws, they joined each other in raising the noise about mass temple destruction by the 14th century Muslim king. Sikandar's characterization as an anti-Hindu ruler, in reality, is in conflict with his tolerant behaviour towards his Hindu subjects. His first Minister was a Hindu, Rai Magre; he had a Hindu commander-in-chief, Achaladeva Achala; and he himself married a Hindu woman, Subhata, who subsequently converted to

Islam. Contrary to his image painted by biased chroniclers, Sikandar was a brave and an exceedingly generous man.<sup>95</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 61.
2. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 143. Ohind, situated few miles from Attock in Pakistan, was the capital of a Hindu kingdom.
3. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 62.
4. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 93.
5. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 62.
6. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, vol. I, Verse 638.
7. Ibid., Verse 165–69.
8. Ibid., Verse 190–91; Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 105.
9. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 57.
10. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verses 1090–95.
11. Ibid., Verse 1344.
12. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits—A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 8; Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1243.
13. Koul, Jayalal. *Lal Ded*, 76.
14. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 85.
15. Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, 40.
16. Khoihami, *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, 195–97; Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 34 quoted by Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 121.
17. Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 121.
18. Ibid.
19. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59–61.
20. Stein, Annotations, *Rajatarangini*, vol. II, 304–08.
21. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 66.
22. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 116.
23. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59.
24. Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, 49.
25. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 115.
26. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59–61.
27. Mirza, *Chach Nama*, 160; Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 397; Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 44.
28. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1149.
29. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 10.
30. Ibid.
31. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verses 188, 1149; Book V III, Verses 885–87, 2264, 2762–64, 2782–84.
32. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 44.

33. Ibid., 45.
34. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 397.
35. Louis Massington, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, trans. Herbert Masson, I: 178–80. (Quoted by Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 47–48).
36. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 50.
37. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 15 and 26–27.
38. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 51, quoting Moti Chandra's *The World of Courtesans* (chapter "The Courtesans of Kashmir"), 184.
39. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1230–32.
40. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 52.
41. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 589; Book V, Verse 177; Book VII, Verses 119, 125, 126; Book VIII, Verse 131.
42. Yule, *Travels of Marco Polo*, I, 167.
43. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 54.
44. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, ff. 6b, 7a. Haidar Malik also refers to these discussions, 37.
45. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 20–21.
46. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 86.
47. Bhat, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 29–30.
48. Ibid., 29.
49. Ibid.
50. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 32.
51. Ibid., 37.
52. Ibid., 32.
53. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 146; Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 64.
54. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 18.
55. Ibid., 42 and 112.
56. Ibid., 95.
57. Ibid., 26.
58. Ibid., 97.
59. Ibid., 32.
60. Ibid., 36.
61. Stein, *The Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, 434. Stein quotes Allami (*The Ain-i-Akbari*, 364) in support of the argument.
62. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book V, Verse 161.
63. Stein, *The Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, 434, fn. 20. Bachbattas were Brahmans who studied Sanskrit and took charge of the religious affairs of the community as compared to *Karkunbattas* who took up government jobs.
64. Knowles, *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*, 139–41.
65. Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 125–26.
66. Pandita, *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, 38; Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 126.
67. Bhat, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 135.
68. Elliot and Dawson, *History of India*, VI: 457–59.
69. Captain Cunningham believes that the complete disruptive overturn of the temples could only have been produced by gunpowder. Dr. Stein, however,

remarks: "This early use of gunpowder in Kashmir has been doubted by others, and I believe rightly. Earthquakes and the imperfect fitting of the stones, observable in all Kashmirian temples, are sufficient to explain the complete ruin, notwithstanding the massive character of the materials. (Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 190)

70. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 96.
71. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 55.
72. Ibid.
73. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 90
74. Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 426.
75. Rogers and Beveridge, *Memoirs of Jahangir*, II: 150.
76. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 21
77. Ibid., 213. In 1967, the Anantnag earthquake caused heavy damage to the 8th century Martand Temple in south Kashmir.
78. Ahmad, "Seismic Risk Reduction Through Indigenous Architecture in Kashmir Valley," 110–17.
79. Ibid.
80. Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab*, II: 245.
81. M. I. Bhat, "Earthshaking Science in Inter-community Issues," *Greater Kashmir*, 13 August 2009.
82. Bilham, Bali, Bhat and Hough, "Historical Earthquakes in Srinagar, Kashmir: Clues from the Shiva Temple at Pandrethan," 107–17.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 130.
86. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 149.
87. Bhan, *Kashmir Sculptures*, 68. The image was first time published by the author in *Shiraza*, 20–24.
88. Bhat (Trans), *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 155.
89. *Wajeez-ut-Tawareekh* and *Tarikh-i-Hassan*.
90. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 59.
91. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 18.
92. Wanchoo, *Chinar Tree*.
93. *Jainatarangini*, Verses 95–106, translated by Dr. Raghunath Singh; J. C. Dutt, 146–48.
94. Bandey, *Contours of Srinagar* 31.
95. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 149, 152.

## Chapter Four

# Power

Towards his last days, while reflecting on his life and experiences, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah<sup>1</sup> described Kashmiri Pandits as 'The Fifth Columnists' and 'The Instruments of Tyranny'.<sup>2</sup> The sweeping portrayal of a community by a person accused of having handed over Kashmir to India on a platter to answer the wishes of this minuscule minority looks incredible. Was the Kashmir's 'tallest leader' being unsavoury during his last days towards a community that had earlier bestowed upon him the title of Vishnu incarnate?<sup>3</sup> To find an answer, a journey through the history of Kashmir with focus on this generally perceived wise community, that formed a merely 4 per cent of Kashmir's population but "exerted influence out of all proportion to its numbers,"<sup>4</sup> is a prerequisite.

The Kashmiri Pandits are *Shaivite* Hindus who consider themselves as 'the twice born' and a special race above the rest. In a caste-driven Hindu society, they form the uppermost caste of Brahmans even as the other three castes of Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are non-existent in Kashmir. Their fair complexion has earned them many a praise in poetry and prose. Regardless of being a small minority, they have played a vital role in politics of the Indian subcontinent and excelled in almost all fields. They became a catalyst for political developments to flow in the reverse direction with a Muslim-majority Kashmir finding itself aligned with a Hindu-majority India in 1947. They constituted a minuscule percentage of Kashmir's population before their migration in 1990 in the wake of an armed rebellion by Kashmiri Muslims against the Indian rule. They claim to be the only aborigines of Kashmir. For the richness of mysticism, philosophy, politics, art and literature, the community's contribution is noteworthy. Mystic poetess Laleshwari, philosopher Abhinavagupta, politicians



Jawaharlal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sanskrit poets Bilhana and Kalhana, Urdu litterateurs Ratan Nath Sarshar, Brij Narayan Chakbast and Daya Shankar Naseem, poets of Kashmiri language, Krishna Joo Razdan and Dina Nath Nadim, a prominent poet of Persian language, Daya Ram Khushdil and film actors Raj Kumar, Jeevan and A. K. Hangal are some of the prominent persons that instantly come to mind as great names in different walks of life. Within Kashmir, the community's contribution to education and medicine and in producing some of the finest teachers and doctors is widely acknowledged. Poet and philosopher, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who himself had Kashmiri ancestry, is eloquent in praise of the Kashmiri Brahmans whom he defines as vibrant at hearts, keen of eye, mature, strenuous in action and the stars of Kashmir's horizon. He writes:

*A'an Brahman zaadgan-e-zindah dil  
Laleh-e-ahmar zi rooye sha'n khajil  
Tez been-o- pukhta kaar-o- sakht kosh  
Az nigah-e-sha'n farang andar kharosh  
Asl-e-sha'n az khaake-e-daamangeer ma'st  
Matla-e-ein akhtara'n Kashmir ma'st*

[Those scions of Brahmans with vibrant hearts, their glowing cheeks put the red tulip to shame. Keen of eye, mature and strenuous in action, their very glance puts Europe into commotion. Their origin is from this protesting soil of ours, the rising place of these stars is our Kashmir.]

The Kashmiri Pandits insist on being called as such instead of Kashmiri Hindus. The community maintains that it was to distinguish them from other upper caste Hindus of India known as the Brahmans. Within Kashmir, since the community belonged to the same Brahman category of Hindus, the designation 'Kashmiri Pandit' was irrelevant and they were, as are till date, known as Batta(s). They are mutton-eating Brahmans. Also, against other non-vegetarian Hindus who consume *jhatka* meat, they eat *halaal*. Rama and Krishna, the prominent Hindu gods, were not worshipped by them. There were no temples consecrated to them in Kashmir. It was only during the Dogra Hindu rule (1846–1947) that such temples were constructed in Kashmir and in deference to their rulers, the Pandits

started celebrating Janmashtami and Diwali and visiting Ram and Hanuman temples. In fact, their Janmashtami is different from that observed by other Hindus. They call it Zaram Sattam and celebrate it a day before Hindus do in India. The practice of *suttee* once widespread among the Hindus in India was unknown to Kashmiri Pandits although Kalhana's account establishes the custom being practised by royal ladies in ancient Kashmir.<sup>5</sup> The "first incident" that happened in Srinagar is reported during the Sikh rule (1819–46) when Moti Ram was the *subedar*.<sup>6</sup> Manohar Nath Tickoo points out the absence of 'cultural, ethical and religious semblance' between Kashmir and India and identifies many a dissimilarity between Kashmiri Hindus and Indian Hindus in the observance of rituals and ceremonies:

Kashmiri Pundits have totally different religious ceremonial and ritual days than of the Indian Hindus and we practice a different mythology. We have no religious attachment with river Ganga; we used to put the ashes of the dead into the "Naraan Nag Gangbal" near Sonamarg. We never celebrate Diwali but "Hearath". We celebrate a religious day which is called "Sheshar Shenkraat" which is celebrated in the winters in order to avoid demonic influence in winters and there is no example of celebrating such a day in the Indian Hindu mythology. Moreover, Kashmiri Pundits celebrate "Shiv Raatri" differently than Indian Hindus; we prepare a lot of non vegetarian food to break the fast, contrary to Hindus who abstain from meat on the day.<sup>7</sup>

Walter Lawrence observes Kashmiri Pandits as "extremely strict in following the rules of Brahmanism when they visit India, but in their own country they do things which would horrify the orthodox Hindus."<sup>8</sup> Another interesting thing he narrates "is that they worship the likeness of Her Majesty the Queen Empress."<sup>9</sup> This, he adds, prevails not only among the Pandits of the city, but also among the village Hindus. During World War I, Kashmiri Pandits held special prayers at the famous Sharika Devi Temple in Srinagar on 4 August 1918, seeking goddess Sharika's blessings for the victory of King George V of the United Kingdom. Invoking the "All pervading power of that omnipotent, spotless and formless supreme being Shri Sharka Ji, we the Kashmiri Pandits subjects of Kashap Mar [Kashmir]" chanted:

Oh, Thou Ruler of rulers, cause the despotic German Emperor to be trampled under the feet of our Benign Emperor George V. Let the British Flag be waved through the length and breadth of his territory.... Oh, Mother Thou art Omniscient and can perceive the agonies of our hearts. Thou who in the twinkling of an eye destroyed the wicked and the proud as Ravana and the deluded as Mahi Ravana and thus restored happiness to the world—Why delayest Thou in our appeal. Now be Thou pleased to accept our prayer and give us an opportunity to approach Thy feet with happy hearts singing Hymns of British victory. We bow before Thee Oh Goddess.<sup>10</sup>

A Pandit would not eat or drink from the hands of a Muslim although from his birth to death Muslims played vital roles in his life. While the 'twice born' openly practised apartheid against his Muslim compatriots, he had no qualms about his children being born at the hands of a Muslim midwife<sup>11</sup> or his dead cremated by a Muslim *kawji*.<sup>12</sup> He was also comfortable at a Muslim holding an umbrella over the head of his bridegroom son.<sup>13</sup> He would not touch poultry or eggs, but would eat wild fowls and eggs of the lake birds and insist these were slaughtered in a Muslim fashion. Since the Kashmiri Pandits consider themselves as a superior race, they do not follow trades that are low in status. Hence, from a foster mother of his children,<sup>14</sup> a cobbler, a potter, a person who fries corns, a porter, a boatman, a carpenter, a mason or a fruit seller,<sup>15</sup> a Kashmiri Brahman was dependent on a Muslim but would not allow him entry into his kitchen even if he was a friend or a domestic help.

A Pandit can be persistent when it comes to pursuing his case and will find newer and intelligent ways of persuasion if the previous failed. Lawrence recalls an interesting anecdote:

A Pandit whose petition had been three times rejected, appeared a fourth time, and I told him if he presented another petition I should have to report him to the local official. The next day the Pandit appeared with a paper in his hand; he was at once ordered to be removed, but explained that it was not a petition but a poem which he wished to present. The poem recited his grievances.<sup>16</sup>

A study of Kashmir's history shows that the Pandit community has wielded enormous influence on the affairs of the state, and its members always held power and clout, irrespective of who ruled Kashmir. One of the reasons for this is the importance they accorded to education. They were quick to learn the languages of the rulers. Some within the community itself, though, admit that "where what is required is flattery, who can beat the Pandit."<sup>17</sup> Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's one time close associate, Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, however, has his own explanation of a Pandit being indispensable for a ruler. In his words:

Suppose you are driving a bus which is filled with passengers and there is no space left even for a blade of grass to accommodate. All of a sudden you see a Pandit on the road signalling you to stop and let him board the lorry. There is zero possibility of taking him in but if you have to reach your destination you will have to make room for him even if it means carrying him on your shoulder. Otherwise, he will lie in the middle of the road and not let you move an inch.<sup>18</sup>

The journey of the Kashmir's minority community from Kashmiri Hindus to Kashmiri Pandits is related to the Mughal rule when members of the community started trickling out of the confines of the Valley into a wider arena of India. There, the sense of pride and belonging to a special creed, which they possessed, received a jolt. They felt like being drowned in an ocean of Hindu society that had its own Brahmans and upper caste elite. The members of the community through their quality of adaptability and serving the powers had won hearts of the occupying Mughal nobility in Kashmir. They were looked upon by the ruling class as trustworthy people in comparison to the Muslim majority that resisted the Mughal occupation of Kashmir. This trust earned the immigrant Kashmiri Hindus some important positions in the corridors of power in Delhi, Agra and Lucknow. One such person who endeared himself to one of the last remnants of the Mughal Empire, King Mohammad Shah, was Jai Ram Bhan who was his courtier. Bhan persuaded Mohammad Shah to issue a royal decree designating Kashmiri Brahmans as Kashmiri Pandits,<sup>19</sup> thus drawing a line of distinction between the Brahmans of Kashmir and those of

India. In the medieval period, when Kashmiris en masse converted to Islam, there remained just a small section of Brahmans who did not convert and represented Hinduism in the country.<sup>20</sup>

It is a common refrain of Hindus in India and Kashmir that Islam spread by sword. If we believe Jonaraja or his later-date version, Jia Lal Kilam, the conversion to Islam was brought about by persecution. The blame of bringing about wholesale conversion of Hindus through repression is squarely placed at the door of Sultan Sikandar and his neo-convert prime minister, Suhabhata. In support of their argument, the persecution theorists quote Muslim historians such as Muhammad Din Fauq and Hassan Khoihami who followed Jonaraja and others like him in alluding to the alleged hounding of the Hindus. However, an important aspect missed here is that if the mass conversion was brought about through persecution and the Hindus had no option but to convert or face death then why the proselytes did not revert to their original faith once Sikandar and Suhabhata were gone and a 'benevolent and secular-to-the-core' Zainul Aabideen assumed power? The latter is believed to have issued an order "allowing all those who had embraced Islam under pressure to return to their faith if they so wished."<sup>21</sup>

To describe the situation in which the Kashmiri Brahmans were after the alleged 'slaughter, forcible conversion and migration', a common refrain of the persecution theorists is that only "eleven families of *Brahmans* were left in Kashmir."<sup>22</sup> However, as late as 1517 AD, historian Sukha Pandit informs us that "thousands" of them attended a religious ritual at Harmukta Ganga of whom 10,000 perished after falling from a precipice when lightning struck them.<sup>23</sup> What would be the size of the population of a community in the country whose members had gathered in such huge numbers only at one place. The myth of 'eleven families' is exploded by the early 17th century Persian chronicle, *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, whose statistical data shows that there lived 1,200 Hindu families as comfortably as those of Muslims.<sup>24</sup>

The advent of Islam in Kashmir was not an isolated happening. By the time it overtook the land, the Islamic breeze blowing from the Arabian Peninsula had already gained a foothold in the Indian subcontinent and nearby countries. The religion had arrived through Arab traders and the companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace

be upon him) in Indonesia, Malaysia, Malabar Coast and parts of China in the 7th century AD where no Sikandar or Aurangzeb had brandished his sword.<sup>25</sup> Towards the east of its place of origin in the Arab Peninsula, Islam had entered Iran and Afghanistan around the same time. In the modern-day Pakistan, the first mosque was built in Sindh in the 8th century, while in North India, Islam had pronouncedly arrived in the 12th century. The arrival of Islam in Kashmir, if anything, was delayed owing to the geographical conditions that made the country a landlocked area making access to it and inflow of ideas difficult. However, traces of Islamic influence had seeped into the Valley centuries before Muslims came to power in Kashmir. Muslim generals and soldiers were employed in the armies of Kashmir as early as in the 11th century AD, when Harsha (1089–1101 AD) was on the throne.<sup>26</sup>

Kashmir could not have remained isolated for long from the sway Islam held on people living on its peripheries. While there can be no denying that an individual ruler or his henchmen might have used force in some cases to ensure conversions but where is the coercion in the spread of Islam in Kashmir when the first known convert to the faith is the ruler of the time himself? Rinchana's conversion at the hands of Saiyid Abdur Rehman Bulbul Shah contradicts all the later day persecution theorists. That Rinchana, who was a Buddhist, wanted to embrace Hinduism but was not allowed to do so by the elitist Brahmins is a subsequent explanation offered by Jonaraja, a century later, to downplay the peaceful mass conversion through preaching.<sup>27</sup> We have already seen the prejudice Jonaraja nursed against Islam and the unease with which he saw the religion peacefully flourishing in Kashmir.

The Kashmiris have been open to new ideas. In matters of religion too, they did not shut themselves up against incoming influences and when they found them more practical for attaining the Ultimate Truth or achieving salvation, they did not shy away from accepting these. When Hinduism was declining as the faith of people in Kashmir, the teachings of Gautama the Buddha received universal acceptance across the length and breadth of the country. Kashmir became one of the most important centres for the spread and development of the new faith. It is generally believed that Buddhism

became dominant in Kashmir during the reign of Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BC), although it was widespread here long before his time. There were many Buddhist *viharas* in Kashmir before Ashoka, while Chinese sources assert that Buddhism had spread in Kashmir just 50 years after *Mahaparinirvana* of *Tathagata*.<sup>28</sup>

In the year 530 AD, Kashmir witnessed the Hun intrusion in the person of marauding Mihirakula and his tribe that perennially changed the political and social landscape of the country. Kalhana describes the cruel person that Mihirakula was in the following words:

The people knew his approach by noticing the vultures, crows and other [birds] which were flying ahead eager to feed on those who were being slain within his armies' [reach].<sup>29</sup>

Mihirakula had no pity for children, no compassion for women and no respect for the aged.<sup>30</sup> When he was about to enter Kashmir along with his horde, he heard the terrified cry of an elephant that had fallen over a precipice. He was so thrilled that he had a hundred other elephants rolled down by force.<sup>31</sup> His predatory character is also chronicled by the famous 7th century AD Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsiang, and a compatriot pilgrim, Sung-yun, who interviewed the monster.<sup>32</sup>

Mihirakula or Mihiragula, as some sources call him, was the leader of the White Huns who later became the rulers of the territories conquered by them from Kabul to Central India. He was an enemy of Buddhism and destroyed Buddhist shrines in Kashmir. He was extremely barbaric, hypocrite, trouble inflictor and a deceptive turn-coat who had spread the network of fake, deceiving and sly *sadhus* and Brahmans throughout India who exploited simpleton Hindus in the name of religion.<sup>33</sup> By their cunningness they would make Hindus fight among themselves and several rulers got entangled in bloody fights by paying heed to them.<sup>34</sup> Taking advantage of the fact that Hindus of India always respected *sadhus* and Brahmans, this group exploited them. They pretended to be Brahmans but clandestinely ate mutton and fish, an abhorrent act for a Brahman, and indulged in all kinds of vices. In the words of B. K. Mukherji:

This sly horde had made the lives of true Hindus miserable.<sup>35</sup>

When the activities of this pack became intolerable, the rajas of India decided to extern them to a place wherefrom they cannot return.<sup>36</sup> According to Stein:

After extensive campaigns, Mihirakula was defeated by Baladitya of Maghada and Yasodharman, and forced to retire around 530 AD to Kashmir and adjoining regions.<sup>37</sup>

Baladitya had captured Mihirakula and was about to kill him when the former's mother intervened and persuaded her son to spare him. Mihirakula then fled to Kashmir where he was warmly received by the king and placed in charge of a small territory. However, true to his character, he later fomented rebellion, killed the king and assumed power himself.<sup>38</sup>

Mihirakula was a patron of *Shaivism*.<sup>39</sup> The "evidence of his coins, in the emblems of bull and trident and in the legends *jayatu trsa*, *jayatu vrsadhvaja*, display a distinct leaning towards *S'aivism*."<sup>40</sup> He founded *Mihiresvara* (shrine of Shiva) at Srinagari and in Holada (Vular pargana) the large town called Mihirapura.<sup>41</sup> Very significantly, he brought to Kashmir Brahmans from Gandhara who resembled him in their habits and bestowed a thousand *agraras* on them at Vijeshwara (Bijbihara).<sup>42</sup> "While the *Naga* cult and Buddhism remained successively the main faiths of Kashmir before the 6th century AD, the *Shaiva* and *Vais'navi Brahmanism* dominated the religious scene of Kashmir thence forward until Islam earned mass conversion"<sup>43</sup> during the 14th–16th century AD. This was also the period when the religious text on sacred places, rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir, the *Nilamata Purana* (6th–7th century AD) and the *mahatmyas* were written after wiping out Buddhism from Kashmir. The *Shaivite* Hinduism in Kashmir is the post-Mihirakula-arrival development, and its profound appearance is traced to the late 8th or the beginning of the 9th century AD.<sup>44</sup>

The birth of *Shaivism* resulted in a new narrative on Kashmir's physical and cultural history that is sought to be fervently guarded till this day. The Kashmiri *Shaivites* distinctly identified themselves as different from other Hindus, adopting their own rituals and festivals. Their shrines and fairs were restricted to Kashmir. They would not celebrate Diwali, the biggest Hindu festival, but observe Shivratri with



much zeal and zest. They created a parallel Ganges, sacred river for Hindus, a separate sangam, and their dress, jewellery and marriage rituals were quite apart from those of other Hindus.<sup>45</sup> Prominent Hindu gods, Ram and Krishna, were not included in their worship. The propounders of *Shaivism*, wearing the mask of Brahmins and with royal patronage, swiftly occupied positions of power and influence. Being crafty and clever, they exploited the religious susceptibility of common masses and maneuvered their own intrusion in the corridors of power even when their patron Mihirakula was long gone. By holding the highest religious positions and knowledge of texts, they wielded tremendous influence and were thus sought after by every succeeding ruler. This situation continued till the 14th century AD when Islam made a prominent entry into Kashmir and the establishment of the Sultanate changed the political and social landscape.

In the meanwhile, we see the Hindu society in Kashmir on gradual decay with all kinds of vices afflicting the people. The Brahmins were in the vanguard of this march to decadence. Kalhana attributes to *Bhattas* "sale of their wives and licentiousness of their women-folk."<sup>46</sup> Ksemendra and Kalhana both talk of

extreme depravity that had pervaded the Shaiva *gurus*. In *Desopadesa* and *Narmamala*, Ksemendra delineates the 'voluptuousness' of Shaiva teachers.<sup>47</sup> They carried on illicit relations even with the wives of their pupils. They nurtured lasciviousness, ire, jealousy, covetousness, capriciousness—in fact all evil deeds. They had a liaison with prostitutes and enjoyed drinks in their company.<sup>48</sup>

They have been described as "guides of rogues who consulted them for success in their vicious deeds."<sup>49</sup> Ksemendra also describes as commonplace the practice among *Shaiva* *gurus* to change cults.<sup>50</sup>

By the time Simhadeva (1286–1300 AD) was on the throne, we see Kashmir having turned into "a country of drunkards and gamblers and women were no better than they should be."<sup>51</sup> The main features of the religious life included moral depravity among the priests and *gurus*, cooperative relations between the rulers and the Brahmins and superimposition of Brahmins.<sup>52</sup> "There were many Saiva [Shaiva] sects with hardly anything common save that all of them regarded Siva as the

cosmic overlord. Broadly speaking there were three types of Saivites who may be classified as semi-Vedic, non-Vedic and anti-Vedic.”<sup>53</sup>

As we have observed earlier, Kashmir’s contact with Islam preceded the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate in the 14th century AD by a couple of centuries. The presence of Muslims in Kashmir was observed as early as in the 8th century AD and by the 11th century AD they were occupying high positions in the army.<sup>54</sup> Kashmir was being gradually influenced by the preaching of Muslim teachers, and by the time Suhadeva (1301–20 AD) ascended the throne, a fair proportion of the population had already accepted Islam.<sup>55</sup> The establishment of the Sultanate and the arrival of Muslim preachers presented a new situation as the religious and cultural scenario of Kashmir saw a swift and colossal change. However, it was only by the end of the 16th century AD that Kashmir was a mass Muslim society.<sup>56</sup>

The new situation left the small section of Brahmans, who stuck to their belief, in a quandary as they were taken over by the feeling of sudden loss of power and their sway over the population which had now adopted a new faith that brought with it its own religious teachers. The mantle of interpreting and propagating religion, the task that was earlier handled by the Brahmans with clout and power, now fell upon the *saiyyads* who accompanied in hundreds the Muslim preachers such as Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and his son Mir Muhammad Hamdani. The advent of Muslim rule in Kashmir and mass conversion of Hindus to Islam, however, did not result in any significant change in the clout of Kashmiri Brahmans with the powers that be. Except during the period of Sikandar when their own converted blood, Suhabhata, was at the helm of affairs and allegedly settled personal scores with them, the Brahmans continued to be at the positions of power. In the words of Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani:

Though Islam became the court religion in 1343 [AD] after Shahmir ascended the throne, the administration continued to be in the hands of the traditional class—the *Brahmans*.<sup>57</sup>

The retention of their old creed did not result in loss of their status and they continued to follow their old religion.<sup>58</sup> In the subsequent years, especially during the period of Zaian-ul-Aabideen, we observe the Kashmiri Brahmans ruling the roost. They held higher positions in

the administration and came to prominence. Some, like Shri Bhatta, would be in constant attendance of the king.<sup>59</sup> The Brahmans like him used their influence to benefit their community.<sup>60</sup> The village administration was totally in their hands. They were in charge of land settlement and agriculture. Gopala Koul, Madho Koul and Ganesha Koul, as the chief and two provincial heads of land settlement and agriculture, appointed men of their own community on subordinate positions like of *patwaris*.<sup>61</sup> Apart from Shri Bhatta, Jonaraja and Srivara who enjoyed the King's patronage, there were many others from the community who held positions of power and influence. Among these were Sadasheo Bayu, Soma Pandit, Sumitra Bhatta, Rupya Bhatta, Karpur Bhatta, Yodha Bhatta, Rupya Bhatta and Jaya Bhatta. There were other Pandits who were given strictly confidential diplomatic missions to execute.<sup>62</sup> The influence of the Brahmans on Zainul Aabideen was so great that "he forbade the killing of fish in certain tanks and meat eating on some days."<sup>63</sup>

During the Chak rule, the Brahmans continued to serve in the administration and to receive land grants. Towards the close of the 15th century AD when Hussain Shah (1563–70) was the ruler, we see Kashmiri Brahmans enjoying the patronage of the royal court with *mathas* built and villages endowed in their favour.<sup>64</sup> The king also "participated in Hindu religious festivals and invited Brahmans to his court."<sup>65</sup>

At the fall of the 16th century AD, Kashmir lost its independence to Mughal India when Akbar's troops annexed the country. As an occupation force, their presence was resisted by Kashmiri Muslims. The loss of freedom was a great shock and setback to them. Akbar used all his tactics to subdue the people but could not earn their love and goodwill. However, he succeeded in enlisting support of the Brahmans who received his special attention and patronage. "The Kashmiri Brahmans chose to identify with the Mughal system."<sup>66</sup> The establishment of the Mughal rule in Kashmir opened "a new vista"<sup>67</sup> for them. After one of his visits to Kashmir, Akbar left along with "a number of Pandits like flies stick to sweet,"<sup>68</sup> chief amongst them was Pandit Sada Koul who was very well treated by Jahangir and Shah Jahan also, and bestowed highest titles such as *Imdadul Saltanat* (Trust of the Empire), *Mushir-ul-Mulk* (Advisor of the State) and *Gam Khaar* (Sympathiser). Such was the influence of the Brahmans on Akbar





































































































































































































































































































































































































































































US.<sup>151</sup> There are others who actively engage on social media in fighting falsehoods surrounding Kashmir. Importantly, some Kashmiri Pandits, including Mona Bhan, Dipti Misri, Nitasha Koul and Sanjay Kak, breaking away from the community narrative, are writing about Kashmir in an objective and conscientious manner.

Many writers and commentators have alluded to the traditional bonhomie between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits existing before 1989. However, what they miss is that this bonhomie existed irrespective of the fact that historically Kashmiri Pandits have never aligned themselves with the majority community on political issues that seriously concerned or bothered their Muslim compatriots. Whether it was the fight against occupation of Kashmir by the Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikhs or the Dogras, or the struggle for the right to the promised self-determination, Kashmiri Pandits always took a position opposite to the majority sentiment. This posturing went beyond the political dimension of the Kashmir issue where post-1947 they have always been unquestioningly supportive of the Indian point of view. Taking a stand on the issues contrary to the feelings of the majority community is pursued by them with conviction. They refuse to join their Muslim compatriots even on economic issues that concerned both the communities. Hence, it were only Muslims who fell to police bullets for agitating against sudden rise in electricity tariff or withdrawal of food subsidy and the Pandits had no reservations in sharing the fruits of the blood that Muslim agitators shed on the streets of Kashmir on these issues. The majority community of Kashmir recalls with disappointment that not a single statement of condemnation or a word of sympathy has ever come from the Pandit community on incidents, of which there are numerous and many admitted officially, of killing of innocent Kashmiri Muslims since the onset of militancy.<sup>152</sup> For several years now, the majority population has been demanding repeal of AFSPA<sup>153</sup> from Kashmir where it was imposed in 1990 following the outbreak of the armed struggle against Indian rule. The Act has been grossly misused and, apart from civil society and pro-freedom organizations in Kashmir, the state government as well as the principal opposition party in the state legislature too have been asking the Government of India to withdraw it. Human rights organizations, both Indian and international, have described

the Act as draconian and demanded its revocation. In the words of Christof Heyns:

The AFSPA in effect allows the state to override rights in the disturbed areas in a much [more] intrusive way than would be the case under a state of emergency, since the right to life is in effect suspended, and this is done without the safeguards applicable to states of emergency.<sup>154</sup>

There is widespread demand for the AFSPA to go from Kashmir. However, the Kashmiri Pandits pursue with the Government of India the continuance of the Act even as it is universally described as running against the soul and spirit of democracy. The Pandit organizations of different denominations have staged protest demonstration in different parts of India and other countries to scuttle any move that might lead to the revocation of the Act. They also met the Indian Defence Minister asking him not to withdraw the Act.<sup>155</sup> During the two major civil unrests in Kashmir in 2008 and 2010, when Kashmir and Jammu were pitted against each other and the Srinagar–Jammu Highway was blocked by Hindu extremists in Jammu to enforce an economic blockade of Kashmir, the majority of them, according to intelligence reports, were young Kashmiri Pandit boys.<sup>156</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Jattu addressed a press conference at Srinagar. Senior journalists, Yusuf Jameel and Mukhtar Ahmad, who reported the press conference for *The Telegraph*, Calcutta and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu respectively recall that Jattu threatened migration of “all 150,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley if, what he alleged, the youth of the community were continued to be discriminated against in matters of government jobs and the situation was not changed for the better.”
2. Representation of the Sanatan Dharama Youngmen’s Association, Srinagar against the Glancy Commission Report, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
3. H. N. Jattu, *Kashmir Times*, 8 September 1988. As an aside, Jattu praised Muslims of Kashmir and said that “despite extreme provocations by a handful of elements majority of the Muslims demonstrated exemplary sense of responsibility and saved the minority community and their places of worship.”

4. Ibid.
5. As told to the author in an interview on 30 January 2016.
6. Dr Mohammad Shafi in an interview with the author on 15 September 2010.
7. Indian Government's response to the uprising was brutal, which took a heavy toll of civilian life, property and human rights. The revenge killings and burning down of neighbourhoods were labelled as actions in self-defence or collateral damage. Over the years, series of massacres of unarmed civilians took place and decades down the lane, no army or paramilitary trooper is known to have been brought to justice. The massacres include Gowkadal (55 killed on 20 January 1990; [Kashmir's First Blood, *Indian Express*, 1 May 2005]), Alamgari Bazar (10 killed on 22 January 1990; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Handwara (26 killed on 25 January 1990, [<http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2011/02/20/25-handwara-men-fell-to-bullets-protesting-gaw-kadal-srinagar-massacre.html>]), Zakura and Tengpora Bypass (33 killed on 1 March 1990; Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 59–60]), Islamia College, Hawal (50 killed on 1 May 1990; [*Greater Kashmir*, 22 April 2013]), Naaz Cinema (10 killed on 19 January 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Khanyar (19 killed on 8 May 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Chota Bazar (32 killed on 11 June 1991; [*Kashmir Times*, 11 June 2012]), Aloosa (15 killed on 12 September 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Sopore (55 killed on 6 January 1993; [Outcry in Delhi over Kashmir Massacres, *The Independent*, London, 8 January 1993]), Lal Chowk (125 killed in conflagration and ensuing firing on 10 April 1993; [Gargan, Edward, "Indian Troops are Blamed as Kashmir Violence Rises," *New York Times*, 18 April 1993]), Bijbehara (37 killed on 22 October 1993; [Siddarth Varadarajan and Manoj Joshi, "BSF record: Guilty are Seldom Punished," *Times of India*, 21 April 2002]).

The burning down of neighbourhoods after gunfight with armed militants include Sopore (250 shops and 50 homes were burnt down [locals claimed 450 buildings were set ablaze]) and Lal Chowk (50 homes and 200 shops were burnt down).

The enforced disappearances are in thousands (The reported 8,000–10,000 enforced disappearances in Indian-administered Kashmir are just one part of a series of human rights violations attributed to the Indian government, including extra-judicial killings, torture and illegal detentions. Azad Esa, *Aljazeera*, 17 April 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/04/2011414213950201149.html>).

The custodial killings have been reported in hundreds. (Jammu and Kashmir Government informed the State Legislative Council on 31 March 2011 that 341 were killed in custody since 1990.) Mass rapes include Kunan Posapora (53

women raped during the intervening night of 23–24 February 1991, *The Siasat Daily*, 27 June 2013; [Indian minister for external affairs, Salman Khurshid said he was ashamed that such an incident happened in his country, *Business Standard*, 28 June 2013]), Saidpora, Shopian (At least 6 but probably 9 women including an 11-years-old girl and a 60-years-old woman gang raped; “Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War,” *Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights*, 8.) and Shopian (two young women aged 22 and 17 were gang raped and murdered on 29 May 2009, erupting entire Kashmir in protest.).

The Indian Government summarily dismissed as attempts to malign its armed forces the reports of these gruesome incidents documented by international human rights groups like the *Amnesty International*, the *Asia Watch* or by those within India itself.

8. Watali was DIG of Police, known for his anti-resistance profile. He was saved in an attack on 18 September 1988 while the alleged assailant, Ajaz Dar, was killed in the gunfight.
9. According to Kashmir Police, the first case of murder of a Kashmiri Pandit was of a woman, Prabhavati from Nawagari, Chadoora in Budgam district. According to police records, Prabhavati was killed at Hari Singh High Street on 14 March 1989. Her killers remained untraced (*Indian Express*, 5 May 2008). The report does not make it clear if the murder was militancy related.
10. Bhat was hanged in India’s Tihar Jail on 11 February 1984.
11. There were many other prominent Muslims who fell victims to unknown guns that ruled the roost for several years in Kashmir. Some of these were Professor Abdul Ahad Wani (killed on 31 December 1993), Dr Abdul Ahad Guru (abducted on 1 April 1993 and body recovered next day), *Mirwaiz* of South Kashmir, Dr Qazi Nisar (killed on 19 June 1994), former Speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Wali Mohammad Itoo (killed on 19 March 1995), Dr Ghulam Qadir Wani (killed on 4 November 1998), legislator Abdul Ahad Kar (killed on 15 May 1999), Abdul Gani Lone (killed on 21 May 2002) and Dr Sheikh Jalaluddin (killed on 18 July 2013).
12. Sayeed, a Kashmiri politician and twice Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, had taken over as the Home Minister of India in the V. P. Singh-led government only five days prior to the kidnapping incident. He was the only Muslim who held this position in free India. Five JKLF men, who were released in exchange of Rubaiya’s freedom, included Sheikh Abdul Hameed, Ghulam Nabi Butt, Noor Muhammad Kalwal, Muhammad Altaf and Javed Ahmad Zargar. Following their release, Rubaiya was set free on 13 December 1989.
13. In a telephonic interview from New Delhi with the author on 8 June 2015.
14. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
15. Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, in an interview with *Greater Kashmir* published on 6 July 2013.
16. Dulat and Sinha, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, 205.
17. *Ibid.*, 306.



18. Vijay Bakaya (former Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir); Pradeep Magazine, "From the Valley, A Selective Remembrance of Things Past," *The Hindu*, 8 February 2013.
19. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5–12 May 1990. Also quoted by Khalid Wasim Hassan in his paper, "Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?"
20. Jammu and Kashmir Police Department figures show 43,849 persons including 16,929 civilians, 21,499 militants and 5,421 security forces personnel killed between January 1990 and April 2013.
21. PSA is another draconian law enacted in Kashmir to silence dissent. Successive governments have misused the Act under which an arrested person is denied access to lawyers or family for a prolonged period. During the 2010 unrest in the Valley, scores of underage children were arrested under the Act and lodged in jails.
22. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 149–50.
23. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
24. Trissal, *Kashmiri Pandit: At the Crossroads of History*; Grover, *The Story of Kashmir: Yesterday and Today*, 737.
25. Tikoo, Professor Manohar Nath in an interview with *Kashmirwatch.com*; Abdul Majid Zargar, *Greater Kashmir*, 30 January 2011. [http://www.kashmir-issue.com/images3/mn\\_tickoo.pdf](http://www.kashmir-issue.com/images3/mn_tickoo.pdf)
26. *The Hindu*, "There Are No Goodbyes," 20 January 2014.
27. Magazine, *The Hindustan Times*, 15 July 2016.
28. Tarkunde, *Report on Kashmir*, April 1990.
29. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinar*. [http://www.saadut.com/2014\\_01\\_19\\_archive.html](http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html)
30. Chowdhary, "Religion and Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir," 164–66.
31. *Ibid.*, 166–67.
32. *Ibid.*, 167.
33. Zainagairee, *Greater Kashmir*, 12 September 2001.
34. Ahmed Ali Fayyaz's Facebook post on 17 July 2016.
35. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?* 10.
36. On 26 June 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in India after the Allahabad High Court unseated her in a case of election fraud filed by her rival, Raj Narain. During the Emergency civil liberties were suspended and Gandhi ruled the country for 21 months with an iron fist until she decided to call fresh elections in which she and her Congress Party suffered humiliating defeat.
37. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India*, 154.
38. Jaleel, "CRPF Men Fired on People Injured and Crying for Help. I pretended to be dead," *Indian Express*, 22 January 2013.
39. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 14.
40. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India*, 154
41. Mirwaiz Molvi Mohammad Farooq was killed by unidentified gunmen at his Nigeen residence on 21 May 1990. The incident resulted in widespread protests.

As thousands of mourners were carrying the body of the slain leader, paramilitary troops stationed at the Islamia College at Hawal in downtown Srinagar opened indiscriminate fire, killing scores of them.

42. *Rising Kashmir*, 27 January 2016; Nasir Ahmad, *Pandit Migration: A Bloody Game*.
43. Wanchoo was killed in mysterious circumstances on December 5, 1992, weeks after he gave a call to Kashmiri Pandit migrants to come out of the clutches of Hindu fundamentalists, referring to the bomb blast in Jammu in which one Kashmiri Pandit youth was killed and his accomplice was caught.

A free-lance photographer, who said that he received a call at about 10.00 a.m. saying that a dead body had been found in Karannagar, went to the place and saw the body lying face down on Balgarden Street, clutching a sheaf of papers in one hand. When the photographer turned the body over, he saw that it was Wanchoo. There was blood on the face and chest, and a bullet hole in the neck. The papers in Wanchoo's hands were documents about human rights cases on which he had been working.

*Human Rights Watch*, "The Human Rights Crisis in Kashmir: A Pattern of Impunity," 132.

44. *Pandit Inkhila: Propaganda Aur Haqaiq*, Weekly, *Takbeer-e-Nav*, Annual Issue 1990.
45. Khurram Parvez's post on his Facebook wall on 21 January 2016.
46. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 148.
47. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 473.
48. Koul, *Daily Alsafa*, 18 September 1990.
49. Motilal Bhat in Azad Essa "Kashmiri Pandits: Why We Never Fled Kashmir," *Aljazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottenconflict/2011/07/201176134818984961.html>
50. Mridu Rai in an interview with Aljazeera. Azad, *Kashmir: The Pandit Question*. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottenconflict/2011/07/2011724204546645823.html>
51. Habibullah, *My Kashmir: Conflict and the Enduring Peace*, 73–74.
52. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies-Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
53. In a telephonic interview from New Delhi with the author on 8 June 2015.
54. Azad, *Kashmir: The Pandit Question*. Mridu Rai in and interview with *Aljazeera*. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottenconflict/2011/07/2011724204546645823.html>
55. Neerja Mattoo, *Panel discussion. Kashmir: Is the Hindu-Muslim Divide Surmountable?*, 3rd Edition of Goa Arts and Literary Festival, 13–17 December 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nea7SOq8Cc&list=PLyergfUc1KUTmT856YY-Y1y2qvi37fZ7K&index=50>  
Mattoo is an educationist and prominent Kashmiri Pandit lady.

56. Puri, *Kashmir Insurgency and After*, 71. Puri was decorated with the third highest Indian civilian award, Padma Bhushan. His statement that he found no hostility among common Muslims in Kashmir against the Pandits and that allegations of gross violations of human rights by the security forces needed an impartial probe earned him the ire of Kashmiri Pandits who demonstrated against him and burnt his effigy in Jammu. He passed away on 30 August 2014 at the age of 86.
57. Rajnath mailed an Inland Letter Card, dated 20 December 1990, to Mushtaq which opens with a prayer: "Hope by God's grace everything is fine there." He further writes, "I tried to write you earlier but due to ill health had to postpone. Anyhow. How is everybody there? I came here in end July—that too when security people at Karan Nagar forced us to leave." Missing his Muslim colleagues back in Kashmir, Rajnath writes, "Convey my salams to Respected Hakani Sahab. I missed his company. I missed other members of the Unit office also. Convey my slams to everybody." Satirist Zareef Ahmad has preserved this letter.
58. Singh, *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*; Mattu, *Greater Kashmir*, 1 August 2001.
59. Committee for Initiative on Kashmir, *Kashmir Imprisoned: A Report*, 17.
60. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?*, 10.
61. Mattu, "The Pandit Migration-I," *Greater Kashmir*, 1 August 2001.
62. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 477–84.
63. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinari*. [http://www.saadut.com/2014\\_01\\_19\\_archive.html](http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html)
64. Chowdhary, *Religion and Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir*, 167.
65. On 22 March 1997, seven Kashmiri Pandits were killed by unidentified gunmen in this village of Central Kashmir district of Budgam.
66. On 25 January 1998, as many as 23 innocent Kashmiri Pandits were massacred by unidentified gunmen in this North Kashmir village of Ganderbal district.
67. On 24 March 2003, as many as 24 Kashmir Pandits were gunned down by unidentified gunmen, reportedly in army fatigue, in this south Kashmir village of Shopian district.
68. *The Rising Kashmir*, 24 March 2016.
69. Ibid.
70. *Greater Kashmir*, 23 March 2014.
71. Ibid.; Also Khuram Parvez's Facebook wall post on 23 March 2016.
72. Ibid.
73. United News of India (UNI), UNI AG RR BS 1607. [www.oneindia.com/2006/10/27/warm-reception-to-bitta-karate-in-srinagar-on-his-release-1161948974.html](http://www.oneindia.com/2006/10/27/warm-reception-to-bitta-karate-in-srinagar-on-his-release-1161948974.html)
74. Ibid.
75. Sanjay Tikoo, the President of KPSS, quoted by *IANS*, 23 March 2015.
76. Dulat disclosed this in an interview with NDTV's Barkha Dut. *Kashmir Observer*, <https://kashmirobsrver.net/2016/local-news/india-funded-militants-kashmir-counter-isi-dulat-9558>

77. Parvez Khurram, Spokesman of Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, Kashmir Life Online, 23 March 2015.
78. Colin Freeman, "The Meadow by Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark: Review," 18 April 2012. [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fiction-reviews/9200926/The-Meadow-by-Adrian-Levy-and-Cathy-Scott-Clark-review.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fiction-reviews/9200926/The-Meadow-by-Adrian-Levy-and-Cathy-Scott-Clark-review.html)
79. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinari*. [http://www.saadut.com/2014\\_01\\_19\\_archive.html](http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html)
80. *Greater Kashmir*, 21 April 2009.
81. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 541.
82. Sharmishtha, *Endless Longings: Journey of a Kashmiri Girl*, 54. The book stands out as a truthful narration of adversities associated with uprooting from one's land and the accompanying hardships of a migrant life, as against the reams of propagandist literature produced on the subject.
83. Ibid.
84. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?*, 10–11. Hassan interviewed a migrant Pandit teacher, Bhan, who ran a coaching centre for Medical Entrance Test at Karan Nagar in Srinagar before his migration to Jammu in 1990.
85. Priyanka Bhatt on her Facebook page, 13 January 2016, (7:31 p.m.).
86. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
87. M. Rasgotra (*Slow Eviction of Pandits from Kashmir*), for instance, refers to the Census Report of 1981 as giving the total population of Kashmiri Pandits "a little over 124,000," and in the next breath says that 300,000 of them fled from the Valley in 1990. ([www.kashmir-information.com/Miscellaneous/Rasgotra1.html](http://www.kashmir-information.com/Miscellaneous/Rasgotra1.html)). This would mean that the Pandits registered an incredible growth of 127 per cent in 9 years as against 6.75 per cent between 1971 and 1981.
88. Jammu and Kashmir Census Report 1981; Toshkhani and Warikoo, *Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits*, 339. (This book gives total population of Kashmiri Pandits in 1981 as 123,828.)
89. Toshkhani and Warikoo, *Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits*, 339.
90. Ibid.
91. *India Today*, 30 April 1990, 10.
92. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 147.
93. Ibid., 6.
94. Evans, "A Departure from History: Kashmiri Pandits, 1990–2001," 19–37.
95. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
96. That is how Rahul Pandita describes Jagmohan in his Tweet on 25 January 2016 after the latter was awarded Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award. Kashmir's civil society criticized the selection of Jagmohan for the award and alleged that the ex-governor was actually honoured for mass killing of Muslims he supervised in Kashmir.

97. PTI news report dated 30 July 2013. "President-Kashmiri Samiti Delhi Rakesh Kaul, in his address made an emotional speech regarding the pitiable condition of the displaced community in the Jagti camp and also the sorry state of affairs of the displaced traders and teachers at Delhi. He gave the detailed account of cultural genocide being perpetrated against the hapless community in Kashmir. He also claimed that the names of many towns and historical places in Kashmir have been changed into Islamic lexicon."
98. *Koshur Encyclopaedia*, vol 1, 24. It is a J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages publication published in 1986.
99. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, 466–67.
100. Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday said 219 Kashmiri Pandits were killed by militants since 1989 while 24,202 families were among the total 38,119 families which migrated out of the Valley due to turmoil. Replying to a question from People's Democratic Party member Syed Basharat Bukhari, Revenue Minister Raman Bhalla told the Assembly in Jammu that '219 Pandits were killed in Kashmir from 1989 to 2004. From 2004, no killing of any person from the community [Kashmiri Pandits] took place till now,' Mr Bhalla said.  
 A total number of 38,119 families comprising 1,42,042 Kashmiri migrants were registered with the Revenue and Relief Ministry till now.  
 The Minister said the Government had also paid an ex gratia of Rs.1 lakh for each death. 'Besides, an amount of Rs. 39,64,91,838 has been paid as compensation to the Pandits on account of damage to their properties since the eruption of militancy', he said.  
 An amount of Rs. 71.95 crore was spent in providing relief and other facilities to the Kashmiri migrants living in Jammu and other parts in 2007–08, Rs. 70.33 crore in 2008–09 and Rs. 68.59 crore from 2009 up to January, 2010.  
 Mr Bhalla said the government was committed to facilitating their return to Kashmir but regretted that no action could be taken on various plans and recommendations as the situation was not conducive for their return. 'With the improvement in the situation in the Valley, the government decided to construct 200 flats at an estimated cost of Rs. 22.90 crore at Sheikhpora Budgam in 2004. And 120 flats have so far been completed of which possession of 60 flats was taken over by the department and inspection of other 60 flats is going on. The construction of remaining 80 flats shall be completed during 2010. Besides, 18 flats have also been constructed through the Jammu and Kashmir Housing Board at Mattan Anantnag', he told the House.  
 A committee headed by M. L. Koul, the then Finance Commissioner, Planning and Development Department, was formed to prepare an action plan for the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants to the Valley. In its report submitted to the Government in 1997–98, the Committee recommended a package of Rs. 2,799.11 crore for the return of migrants.

Mr. Bhalla said a special package of Rs. 1,618.40 crore was sanctioned by the Government of India for the return and rehabilitation of the migrants. 'Under this scheme, 3,000 supernumerary posts have been created, exclusively for the Kashmiri migrants, willing to return to the Valley. These posts have already been referred to the recruiting agencies and the process for the selection of these posts is on', he said.

But, despite all these rehabilitation packages, not a single Kashmiri migrant has returned to the Valley, the Minister rued.

He said that 808 Pandit families consisting of 3,445 people were still living in the Valley. 'These families have never migrated', he said. *The Hindu*, 24 March 2010.

101. PTI news report dated 16 August 2011 carried by *Greater Kashmir* on 17 August 2011, quoted Indian Minister of State for Home, Jitendra Singh as informing the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Indian Parliament) that "219 Kashmiri Pandits were killed in the State [Jammu and Kashmir] since 1989 and 58,697 families are reported to have left their homes due to the onset of militancy in Kashmir Valley."
102. Randeep Singh Nandal, *Times of India*, [<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/State-data-refutes-claim-of-1-lakh-killed-in-Kashmir/article-show/8918214.cms>]
103. Ibid.
104. Rahul Bhat, *Kashmir Times*, 3 February 2015.
105. Tikoo, Sanjay, "We do not agree with this propaganda from outside that 3000 to 4000 Pandits were killed in Kashmir" (*Greater Kashmir*, 20 June 2011). Incidentally, in January 2016 (*Greater Kashmir*, 29 January 2016), Tikoo revised his figure of Pandit casualties to 670 without citing any reason why he did not stick to his earlier quoted figure.
106. Motilal Bhat, "Kashmiri Pandits: Not An Easy Going for Those Who Stayed On – I," *Kashmir Times*, 24 July 2013.
107. Kashmiri Pandit Network, "Atrocities on Women and Children." <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
108. To a question whether this incident took place, asked under the RTI Act, 2009, the District Police Office, Srinagar, vide letter No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015, replied with an emphatic 'No'.
109. Kashmiri Pandit Network, "Atrocities on Women and Children." <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>.
110. Letter from District Police Office, Srinagar, vide No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015.
111. Ibid.
112. Kashmiri Pandit Network, "Atrocities on Women and Children." <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
113. Letter from District Police Office, Srinagar vide No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015.
114. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_rights\\_abuses\\_in\\_Jammu\\_and\\_Kashmir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_abuses_in_Jammu_and_Kashmir)

115. *Kashmir Forum*. <http://www.kashmirforum.org/violence-against-kashmiri-hindus.htm>, accessed 20 November 2016.
116. Kashmiri Pandit Network, "Atrocities on Women and Children." <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
117. Letter of Deputy Superintendent of Police, (HQrs) Pulwama vide No. Hqrs-55A/RTI/2015/5615-16, dated 17 September 2015, issued in response to an RTI application by the present author.
118. Hinduism Today, "Kashmir's Crisis." [www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3877](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3877)
119. <http://koausa.org/history/genocide.html>
120. Babri Mosque was built in the 16th century during the reign of the first Mughal ruler of India, Zahiruddin Babar. Some Hindu groups later alleged that it was built over the site of a temple. The dispute led to communal polarization and litigation between the two communities. BJP spearheaded a campaign for reclaiming the site as the birthplace of Ram, a Hindu god, and building a Ram Temple over it. On 6 December 1992, when the matter was still in the court, tens of thousands of Hindu activists descended in Ayodhya in the presence of the top BJP leadership and demolished the mosque in broad daylight.
121. Harinder Baweja, "Damaging Lies," *Indiatoday.in*, 28 February 1993. [india-today.intoday.in/story/bjp-rants-about-temples-in-kashmir-being-destroyed-but-claims-fall-flat/1/301723.html](http://india-today.intoday.in/story/bjp-rants-about-temples-in-kashmir-being-destroyed-but-claims-fall-flat/1/301723.html)
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid. Verghese earned wide condemnation from rights groups for giving a clean chit to the perpetrators of the Kunanposh Pora mass rape.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid. Ajaz Kakroo who was the Deputy Commissioner of Baramulla district in 2005, and who hails from the town, does not recall the two temples referred to in the *India Today* report as being damaged. On 8 October 2005, the day Kashmir was struck by a massive earthquake, he accompanied Governor S. K. Sinha to Shailputri temple and found it functional.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Puri, *Kashmir: Insurgency and After*, 73.
132. Ibid., 72-73.
133. *Times of India* and DNA, Online edition, 8 July 2009.
134. *Rising Kashmir*, 22 July 2015.
135. *The Sunday Guardian*, Online edition, 27 May 2012.
136. Chopra, *Rising Kashmir*, 4 April 2015.
137. Sukhdeep Kour, "J-K floods: When Waters Rose, Muslims in Srinagar Rescued Pandits," *The Hindustan Times*, Online edition. 16 September 2014.

138. Seema Mustafa, *Rising Kashmir*. <http://www.risingkashmir.com/when-pak-journalists-maintained-silence-on-kashmir/>
139. Shekhar Gupta, *Indiatoday.in*, 9 October 2014.
140. "Tempted Temporality," *Kashmir Life*, 8 April 2013.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
144. *The Hindu*, 24 March 2010. Interestingly, in July 2014, the BJP Government at the Centre, through a press release of its Home Ministry, gave the number of the total families, including some Sikh and Muslim families, migrating from Kashmir to Jammu, Delhi and other parts of India as 57,000. It also mentioned 60,452 migrant families as registered 'at present' in different parts of India including 38,119 at Jammu and 19,338 at Delhi (Handout of the Press Bureau of Information, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, dated July 14, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=106628>).
145. In June 2016, Jammu and Kashmir Government informed the State Assembly that a total of 154,000 people had migrated from Kashmir in the wake of militancy; see *Greater Kashmir*, 9 June 2016. These also include Muslims and Sikhs.
146. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinar*. [http://www.saadut.com/2014\\_01\\_19\\_archive.html](http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html)
147. "While Mr. Pandita [author of the book] holds the entire Muslim community complicit in the exodus and even implicates his neighbourhood, I know of many Pundits who say their Muslim friends and neighbours had no role to play in it and even pleaded with them not to leave." Pradeep Magazine, *The Hindu* [Debate], 8 February 2013.
148. A Kashmiri Pandit group Friday said Muslims cannot be blamed for mass exodus of their community from Kashmir and demanded thorough probe into Nadimarg, Vandhama and other incidents. 'Muslims have helped us during the most troubled times. They have suffered badly during past two decades. We cannot blame them for mass exodus of Pandits and other problems being faced by us', President Hindu Welfare Society of Kashmir (HWSK), A. K. Rajpuri, told reporters here. HWSK is an organisation of Pandits, who stayed back and did not migrate after eruption of militancy in the State.  
Rajpuri said there should be a thorough investigation in various incidents, where their community members were targets. 'There should be thorough probe in Wandhama, Nadimarg, Chattisinghpura and other incidents'. He said Muslims can't be responsible for their mass exodus. 'I am myself living in a Muslim house. They arrange flowers for me for my prayers. They have helped us like their own family members'.



Rajpuri said there have been many occasions, where Muslims performed the last rites of the Pandits. 'Under no circumstances, should they (Muslims) be held responsible for our miseries'.

He said the Pandits staying back in Valley don't want security, which has been provided to them by the government. 'We are under chains. We do not need any security from the government. It should be removed from our areas', he said. HWSK President said police force deployed at their houses leave a bad impression on the minds of their children. 'Our children are scared of these forces. It has created fear psychosis among our children'.

(*Rising Kashmir*, Srinagar, 12 October 2012)

149. Basharat Shameem, "Discerning Kashmir's Contemporary English Literature," <http://ddekku.edu.in/Portals/0/Etutorials/Discerning%20Kashmir's%20Contemporary%20English%20Literature.pdf>
150. Samreen Mushtaq, Ifrah Butt, Essar Batool, Natasha Rather and Munaza Rashid have co-authored the book, which was officially released at the Jaipur Literature Festival in January 2016. The book highlights the horrible occurrence that Batool termed as "one of the biggest incidents in the history of sexual violence in probably the whole of south Asia," adding, "People who have been part of cover ups and distortion of facts should worry about how they will sound" (*Greater Kashmir*, 22 February 2016). During the height of militancy in Kashmir in February 1991, an incident of 'mass rape by army' at Kunan Poshtpora in border district of Kupwara came to light. There was international uproar over the incident. The Indian Government rejected the allegation. The Press Council of India appointed a team headed by senior journalist B. G. Verghese to look into the complaint. The team in its report absolved the army of any charges. International human rights organizations expressed serious doubts about the integrity of the investigation and the manner in which it was conducted, stating that the Indian government launched a "campaign to acquit the army of charges of human rights violations and discredit those who brought the charges" (Human Rights Watch World Report 1992).
151. They include Muhammad Junaid, Ather Zia, Arif Ayaz Parray, Irfan Mehraj, Uzma Falak, and Essar Batool.
152. For the first time in 26 years, a group of 29 outside Valley-based Kashmiri Pandits issued a statement of solidarity and support for Kashmiri Muslim students who have been targets of repeated attacks and intimidation by the right wing Hindu groups in different states of India. In a joint statement posted on social media on 8 April 2016, the group vowed to fight for the right of these Muslim students to education anywhere in India. Pertinently, as an adverse fallout of a continuous negative media publicity of Kashmir and its majority community, Kashmiri Muslim students studying in different educational institutions across India increasingly find themselves as target of hate groups.
153. AFSPA, promulgated in 1958 to quell insurgency in the North-East, was extended to Jammu and Kashmir in 1990. The Act empowers the armed forces

to kill a person on mere suspicion or arrest him or her without warrant, search or destroy houses and stop, search or seize a vehicle, making the opinion of the armed forces personnel, as low as a non-commissioned officer, to be sufficient cause for taking such a harsh action. The Act has come in for severe criticism for its rampant misuse in Kashmir. There have been lot of voices including from the incumbent provincial governments to repeal the Act, but the Indian Army has opposed all such moves. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Christof Heyns, on a fact-finding mission in Kashmir in March 2012, called for the repeal of the Act, saying it has no role to play in a democracy (*The Hindu*, 31 March 2012). The International Commission of Jurists urged India to repeal the AFSPA without further delay. It observed: "The AFSPA has facilitated gross human rights violations by the armed forces in the areas in which it is operational. It is a repressive and draconian law that should have no place in today's India" (*Greater Kashmir*, 7 November 2015).

154. Christof Heyns, "United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions," *The Hindu*, 31 March 2012.
155. PTI. [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-09-15/news/27606037\\_1\\_afspa-withdrawal-kashmiri-pandits-panun-kashmir](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-09-15/news/27606037_1_afspa-withdrawal-kashmiri-pandits-panun-kashmir)
156. Sameer Yasir, *First Post*, 20 January 2016. <http://www.firstpost.com/india/26-years-in-exile-heres-why-the-kashmiri-pandits-are-in-no-hurry-to-return-to-the-valley-2591406.html>

## Chapter Eight

# Homeland

Soon after, almost the entire community of Kashmiri Pandits left the Valley in 1990 and were confronted with challenges of a new and harsh environment, the radicals among them got together and assumed their leadership. In December 1990, they floated an organization called Panun Kashmir<sup>1</sup> (our own Kashmir), describing it as “a struggle to re-conquer that Kashmir which is almost lost,” and an effort to save Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir and India.<sup>2</sup> Besides claiming to be a struggle for “survival as a cultural entity and an ancient race,” the organization described itself as “a movement for the political survival of over 700,000 Kashmiri Pandits in their birth land.”<sup>3</sup>

A year later, on 28 December 1991, Panun Kashmir adopted a resolution, *margdarshan* (guidance), at Jammu, calling for a separate and exclusive homeland for Kashmiri Pandits to be carved out of the “regions of the Valley to the East and North of river Jhelum.” The resolution further demanded that the homeland for Kashmiri Pandits “driven out of Kashmir in the past and who yearn to return and those who were forced to leave on account of the terrorist violence in Kashmir” be governed by the Constitution of India and placed under central administration with a Union Territory Status till it evolves its own economic and political infrastructure. The geographical area of the proposed homeland identified in a map circulated by Panun Kashmir comprises two-thirds of the entire Kashmir Valley, including lakes, rivers and mountain ranges.

To justify the demand for a separate Hindu Homeland, Panun Kashmir amplifies the old narrative that Kashmiri Pandits, a persecuted community, were the original inhabitants of Kashmir who have suffered heavily at the hands of Muslim rulers since the advent of Islam in Kashmir and who were forcibly reduced to a minority and

subjected to repeated migration over the centuries, the latest being in 1990. The resolution prefers to call Kashmiri Pandits as Kashmiri Hindus, and observes that

The Kashmiri Hindus have become the first victims of terrorism as a result of which they had to flee the place of their abode. The Hindus in Kashmir have, right from the dawn of freedom faced and fought communalism and fundamentalism. They are a part of the Vedic heartland of India and have lived in Kashmir from times immemorial. In fact, they are the original inhabitants of the valley of Kashmir, now reduced to an ethnic minority, with a history of more than five thousand years dating back beyond the "Neelmat Era" almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.

The proposed separate homeland is sought to be governed by the Constitution of India sans Article 370.<sup>4</sup> In the absence of a separate homeland, Panun Kashmir rejects calls for return of Pandits to Kashmir, arguing that the community cannot return to the "servitude of a Muslim State."<sup>5</sup>

According to the map of the proposed separate homeland published by Panun Kashmir, it is sought to be created out of the parts of the districts of Anantnag, Pulwama, Srinagar, Baramulla and the whole of districts of Kulgam, Shopian, Ganderbal, Bandipora and Kupwara. Roughly, it covers about 10,600 sq. km of the Kashmir Valley's total area of about 15,500 sq. km, which means 68.38 per cent of the Valley is claimed for a mere 4 per cent population (as per 1981 census). In plain language, Panun Kashmir does not only want over 68 per cent of the total area of Kashmir but also throw millions of Muslims out of it to claim a separate and exclusive Hindu Homeland. ('Thrown out,' because there is no resettlement plan envisaged in Panun Kashmir proposal for them. Obviously, these millions of Kashmiri Muslims have to fend for themselves.) The claimed area is the most fertile region of Kashmir and is its rice bowl. Further, it includes almost all the water sources of Kashmir, including Jhelum, Lidder, Sindh, Dal Lake, Wular Lake, Manasbal Lake as well as its main glaciers—Kolahoi and Sheeshnag. It also lays claim on nearly all tourist destinations, including Verinag, Kokarnag, Achhabal, Daksum,

the Mughal Gardens, Dachigam, Sonamarg and Manasbal. Since the homeland is sought to be governed by the Constitution of India with no Article 370, it would be open for Hindus from different parts of India to acquire property and settle there.

Demand for a separate homeland has succeeded in generating support among the Pandits, especially the post-migration generation. Shyam Koul believes that the demand for a separate homeland "draws its strength essentially from the new generation in the age group of 20–40."<sup>6</sup> A large section of the community, particularly the old generation, was initially confused about or simply lukewarm to the idea, but there has been no outright rejection of the demand from within the community. Sanjay Tikoo of the KPSS is the sole voice to have openly opposed the demand for a separate homeland and observance of 19 January as the Holocaust Day. "We stayed put in Kashmir and faced tough times with our Muslim brethren and the day has no meaning for us," Tikoo said in a press statement.<sup>7</sup>

Panun Kashmir intelligently uses the term 'Kashmiri Hindus' instead of the 'Kashmiri Pandits' to invoke empathy of a larger Hindu mass of India whom it wants to believe that the very survival of Kashmiri Pandits is at stake unless they are settled in a separate territory within Kashmir, fully protected by the Indian State. The right wing Hindu political organizations of India are too eager to support the idea. The BJP, subscribing as it were to the theory of persecution of Kashmiri Pandits, leads the bandwagon and makes the return of the migrants to Kashmir as an inalienable part of its politics. The 'Global Meet of Pandits' held at New Delhi in 2012 made a pitch for a 'landing place' for the community in the Valley, and "a wholesome Satellite City"<sup>8</sup> was held out as an ideal refuge in Kashmir. The city is perceived to be self-sufficient in terms of "overall infrastructure, economic avenues, adequate land, decent accommodation, educational institutions, medical care, recreation centres and commercial infrastructures."<sup>9</sup>

Although Panun Kashmir was successful in creating sympathy for its demand within a section of Hindus outside Kashmir, the erstwhile Congress-led United People's Alliance Government in India did not come out in open support of a separate Hindu homeland. At the same time, however, the return of the migrant Pandits to Kashmir

remained its policy pursuit. In 2008, it announced a comprehensive package of ₹1,618.40 crore for their return and rehabilitation. The package provided for financial assistance for purchase and construction of houses, repair and renovation of damaged, unused and dilapidated houses, construction of transit accommodation, continuation of cash relief, students scholarship and employment, assistance to the agriculturists and horticulturist and waiver of interest on unpaid loans.<sup>10</sup> As many as 1,474 state government jobs were created for the migrant Pandit youths and 505 transit accommodations, including 200 flats at Sheikhpora in the Central Kashmir district of Budgam, were constructed for them.<sup>11</sup> On 28 April 2015, the incumbent Home Minister, Rajnath Singh, told the Parliament that the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir had assured him to earmark 50 acres of land as a first instalment for exclusive townships for Kashmiri Pandits. Singh's ministry was planning 3–4 composite townships of 2,500 families each, including in Srinagar and Anantnag districts.<sup>12</sup> Earlier in 2013, Jammu and Kashmir Government had authorized Deputy Commissioners of various districts in the Valley to identify state land for setting up Pandit clusters. The government also decided to acquire private land where the state land was not available.<sup>13</sup> In other words, it meant that where the government land was not available, private individuals (in this case Muslims) would be divested of their landed assets to rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits. For many, the government decision brought back memories of the Dogra rule when Muslims in villages were divested of their landed holdings, which were distributed among non-Muslim elite.

For the RSS, Kashmir enjoys a special position in its ideology of de-Islamizing the 'Hindu land'. The organization considers the Valley as "its first regiment in its ideological battle right from the day of the State's accession to India on 26 October 1947."<sup>14</sup> It claims to be awakening the Hindus against the "onslaught of Islamic imperialism on the centuries old glorious past of Hindu Kashmir,"<sup>15</sup> which was "a seat of Hindu culture and learning,"<sup>16</sup> at every step of which "there lie our worship and sacred place."<sup>17</sup> The RSS started its tryst with Kashmir in 1944 when it opened a branch in Srinagar with Balraj Madhok as its chief who, in the wake of the Tribal Attack in October 1947, ran away from Kashmir reportedly leaving behind his motorcycle in

Srinagar. The organization is not reconciled to the reality of a Muslim majority Kashmir—a land which, like Panun Kashmir, it believes had a Hindu origin and was ‘Islamized’ by Muslim invaders after the 13th century AD.<sup>18</sup> It wants to ‘reclaim’ Kashmir as the abode of Hindu deities. The conversion of its overwhelming population to Islam, it alleges, was brought about by force and coercion.

In 1947, when a Muslim-majority Hindu-ruled Jammu and Kashmir seemed to be going to Pakistan on the basis of the principle of the Partition, the RSS was toying with the idea of an independent state with a Hindu ruler to realize its dream of regaining Kashmir as a Hindu land. The organization having made strong inroads in Jammu and the royal palace, through an influential palace priest, Sant Dev, sold Maharaja Hari Singh the dream of being the monarch of an independent country separate from both India and Pakistan. A day after Pakistan was born, when India made its tryst with independence on 15 August 1947, there were celebrations in Jammu, not to rejoice the freedom of India but the independence of Jammu and Kashmir under Hari Singh. Senior journalist and a close watcher of the developments of that period, Ved Bhasin, recalls that pro-Maharaja organizations like Hindu Rajya Sabha and the RSS put up banners across the city roads along with the Maharaja’s flag proclaiming Hari Singh as the ‘Maharaja Adhiraj Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet Ha’ (ruler of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet, etc., as the state was known then).<sup>19</sup> The banners celebrated an independent Jammu and Kashmir, and the RSS was prominent in the show of this sentiment. The RSS and the pro-Maharaja forces even tore the Indian National Flag when it was hoisted in the city and attacked those who had unfurled it. Reflecting on the development, Bhasin says:

After the formation of popular Government headed by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah when the Students Union hoisted the Indian National Flag and the National Conference Flag on the Prince of Wales College, these were torn by RSS supporters next morning. The tearing apart of the flags was followed by an attack on the Union activists.<sup>20</sup>

The RSS wishes away the 480-year (1339–1819) long Muslim rule in Kashmir as well as its Muslim majority character. Its agenda for

Kashmir was explicitly spelt out by its mouthpiece, *The Organiser*, as early as on 6 November 1947, through an editorial titled "Importance of Kashmir." It unveils the plan to deal with the Muslim majority of the land thus: "Kashmir has vast space for the expansion of population. If industrialized, it can absorb crores of people [from rest of India]." Senior BJP leader, Subramaniam Swami, who advocates demographic change in Kashmir as an ideal solution for Muslim separatism, campaigns for settling 1,000,000 ex-servicemen and families in Kashmir and abrogation of the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.<sup>21</sup> The Article is under severe attack from the RSS, and its abrogation is high on the agenda of the ruling BJP. Swami contends that every Hindu has a claim on Kashmir and that his own claim flows from his *gotra*, Kashyapa,<sup>22</sup> a mythical character said to have reclaimed Kashmir Valley from the huge Satisar Lake. Constitutional experts have opined that the abrogation of the Article 370 would pose a serious challenge to Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the Indian Union and could restore the former Princely State to the pre-1947 position. The ruling BJP Government in Delhi has now shifted focus to the Article 35A of the Indian Constitution that debars non-residents of Jammu and Kashmir from buying land or property, getting a government job or voting in assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The Article 35A is powered by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, and allows the State to grant special privileges and rights to its permanent residents. A Delhi-based RSS-backed organization, Jammu and Kashmir Study Centre, has moved the Supreme Court of India to do away with the Article.

The BJP Government's intensions on the alleged demographic engineering in Kashmir came to the fore recently through a letter written by the Indian Minister of defence, Manohar Parrikar to his party colleague and fellow parliamentarian, Tarun Vijay, informing him that he has asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to take appropriate action on providing land to ex-servicemen who have served in Kashmir for at least three years or died in action there.<sup>23</sup> Vijay had also demanded a 25-year tax holiday for such soldiers who "initiate an industry or any enterprise"<sup>24</sup> in Kashmir. The disclosure of the Parrikar letter took the lid of some serious developments that had secretly taken place behind the back of the majority community



of Kashmir. In 2012, a proposal was moved to set up settlement in Kashmir for retired and serving soldiers of the Indian Army. The proposal was cleared in 2015 by the Rajya Sainik Board (State Soldiers' Board), headed by Jammu and Kashmir Governor, N. N. Vohra. In the month of August, newspapers reported that the State Government had identified 173 kanals (21 acres) of land near the Srinagar Airport for the Sainik Colony, and that 6,000 retired and serving soldiers had applied for plots in the proposed colony.<sup>25</sup> The applicants include 340 Kashmiri Pandit ex-soldiers.<sup>26</sup> In view of the large number of applicants, the Governor was reported to be contemplating to ask for the entire 416 kanal stretch of government land available there. The *Kashmir Reader* quoted a Home Department official confirming that "servicemen from other parts of India also will be settled in the colony."<sup>27</sup> The Mufti Mohammad Sayeed led BJP-PDP (PDP stands for Peoples Democratic Party) coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir reacted to the disclosure with contradictory statements "from an endorsement with riders to outright denial."<sup>28</sup> Sayeed's daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, who stepped into the shoes of her father as Chief Minister, denied that her government was pursuing any proposal for setting up *sainik* colonies in Kashmir even as district heads were instructed to speed up process for identifying land for the purpose. Tarun Vijay, a BJP lawmaker of India, spilled the beans by claiming that Mehbooba Mufti was his good friend in whom he had trust and that she would set up *sainik* colonies at appropriate time. He said that the proposed *sainik* colonies "would bring fragrance of Indianness and principal mainstream of patriotic India to Valley to overcome the smell of stone pelting and guns."<sup>29</sup> Vijay was poetically referring to his party's dream project—full integration of Kashmir with India—that Kashmiris view as the real motive of setting up of the *sainik* colonies, and vehemently resist. The disclosure set alarm bells ringing and created uproar in Kashmir. People in general and the separatist organizations in particular accused the State Government of working on the RSS agenda in Kashmir.<sup>30</sup> The academic and civil society circles rejected the *sainik* colony as the "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's avowed agenda of settling outsiders in the Valley"<sup>31</sup> and "a sensitive issue with implication in Kashmir."<sup>32</sup> Questions were raised as to why a separate *sainik* colony was planned in the Valley "when every nook

and corner of this place is militarised.”<sup>33</sup> Omar Abdullah condemned the proposal as “a ruse to settle non-state subjects in Kashmir,” a scenario that Syed Ali Shah Geelani termed as an open aggression on Kashmir and “a resist or die like situation for Kashmiri people.”<sup>34</sup>

Demand for a separate homeland or the announcement of separate settlements by the present BJP Government in New Delhi evoked both severe condemnation and instant rejection in Kashmir equally by the masses, various pro-India political parties as well as separatist organizations. Even the BJP, though never openly rejecting the demand for a separate homeland, did not officially push this idea neither during its first stint in power (1998–2003) as the lead coalition partner nor now when it runs the federal government with absolute parliamentary majority since 2014. Instead, it came up with the separate settlements plan, which also drew flak, apart from the Kashmiri resistance groups, from both the pro-India political parties in the Valley and the non-BJP political parties of India, including the Indian National Congress. Although the Government of India has now informed the Parliament that there was no proposal for setting up “separate colonies for Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir,”<sup>35</sup> the majority population in the Valley views the statement as a ploy, especially in view of repeated assertions by BJP leaders that separate colonies for the migrant Pandits and former soldiers would be created in Kashmir.

Within Kashmir, former Chief Minister and leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Omar Abdullah, rejected the idea of separate settlements as “ghettos in segregated and inherently unsafe camps.”<sup>36</sup> The Chairman, JKLF, Mohammad Yasin Malik, opposed the move warning that separate settlements would not be allowed.<sup>37</sup> The Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (G), Syed Ali Shah Geelani, called for a general strike and peaceful protest against the proposed settlements while welcoming the return of migrant Pandits to their original places of living.<sup>38</sup> He appealed the Pandits “not to accept this plan which will only divide our society and create civil strife.”<sup>39</sup> *Mirwaiz* of Kashmir and Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (M), Maulvi Umar Farooq, rejected the separate settlement plan as “a ploy to divide the people of Kashmir on communal lines.”<sup>40</sup> The separatist leaders decided to close their ranks and present a joint fight against the plan. For the first time since the All Parties

Hurriyat Conference split in 2003, the leaders of two factions, along with Mohammad Yasin Malik of the JKLF, met over an *iftaar* party hosted by Syed Ali Shah Geelani and resolved to start a long-term agitation against the BJP-PDP coalition government. The civil society of Kashmir was also up in arms against the government plan.

Apprehensions in Kashmir were further heightened by reports that the Government of India was planning to connect Pahalgam and Sonamarg, the two base camps for the Amarnath yatra, with rail link. The development was seen in conjunction with the earlier reports that during the controversial governorship of S. K. Sinha, a proposal was secretly being worked out to create a Hindu pilgrim circuit by connecting the Amarnath shrine with the Ragnya Devi Temple at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district, the to-be reconstructed, and extended Ganpatyar Temple in downtown Srinagar and the Martand temple at Mattan in South Kashmir. En route, many small temples were reportedly also envisaged. A retired official of the State Government confirmed that the Government of India had sought views of the State Government on the proposal. Could it be more than a coincidence that the proposed circuit falls within the territory claimed as homeland by Panun Kashmir? While as the plan is viewed as a serious threat to the Muslim character of Kashmir, a target of the RSS and its affiliated right wing Hindu groups of India, the Kashmir Centre for Social and Development Studies (KCSDS), a civil society initiative, opposed the proposed rail connectivity of Pahalgam and Sonamarg on environmental grounds. It termed the plan as disastrous for the ecologically fragile area already under tremendous stress because of a huge number of visitors. Mehbooba Mufti, the then leader of the ruling coalition partner, PDP, was severely criticized for pursuing with the Indian Minister for Railways the rail connectivity for the two tourist destinations. The General Secretary of the BJP and its point man in Kashmir, Ram Madhav's statement that the BJP-PDP coalition Government in Kashmir was functioning according to Syama Prasad Mukherjee's ideology<sup>41</sup> has added to the concerns of Kashmiri Muslims about the RSS plan on Kashmir. Mukherjee was an avowed opponent of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian Constitution.

A controversial remark by Mehbooba Mufti added fuel to the fire ignited by the debate on separate settlements for Kashmiri Pandits.

During her maiden speech as Chief Minister in the State Assembly, she denied that her BJP-supported Government was setting up separate settlements for migrant Kashmiri Pandits but at the same time announced that transit colonies would be constructed to provide them breathing time before they move to their original places. However, she stirred the hornet's nest by the analogy she used in support of her argument. "As of now we can't put them like pigeons among cats,"<sup>42</sup> she told the Assembly. This 'hunter and hunted' inference drawn by no less a person than the Chief Minister herself heightened public anger. Both separatist and opposition parties condemned her for, what they alleged, demonizing the Muslim majority of Kashmir. She was accused of suggesting that Kashmiri Pandits were unsafe in the company of Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>43</sup> The reckless analogy was soon exposed by 35 Hindu business families living safely among Kashmiri Muslims in the heart of North Kashmir's Kupwara town. The families had migrated to Jammu in 1990 but voluntarily returned five years later, and "are an integral part of the local community."<sup>44</sup> For Manoj Kumar, General Secretary Traders' Federation, Kupwara, "it is better to live in Tihar Jail than reside in separate colonies."<sup>45</sup>

Within days of the Chief Minister's remark, Nisha, a girl from Jammu married to Satish Kumar, a Kashmiri Pandit of Sirnoo village in South Kashmir's Pulwama town, trashed the perception about the Pandits living among Muslim dwellings like 'pigeons among cats'. She told a journalist:

When I got married, I was very much scared. I was concerned about our security after I saw our house surrounded by Muslim dwellings. But my fears got away after seeing the love and affection of my Muslim neighbours here. Among them, I never feel being outside my home.... The people here take our care more than members of our own community would do.<sup>46</sup>

There are 14 Pandit families living with their Muslim neighbours in Sirnoo and among them Rakesh Kumar and Mohammad Akbar Sofi, along with their families, jointly live in a house: a conspicuous example of a 'pigeon' coexisting with a 'cat'!

The widespread resentment against separate settlements forced (at least for now) the State Government to announce that no such move

was in the offing. However, Panun Kashmir was quick to reiterate that the "rehabilitation of the community was only possible if a separate homeland with the status of Union Territory was created within the Valley."<sup>47</sup> A faction of Panun Kashmir described those Pandits who were not supportive of a separate homeland as 'victim collaborators within the community' harnessed by the government of the day for political expediency.<sup>48</sup>

Over the years, Panun Kashmir has succeeded in introducing a politically and communally loaded terminology into the wider discourse on Kashmir. Its assertion to 'reconquer Kashmir' syncs with the RSS's declared policy of 'reclaiming Kashmir as a Hindu land'. The changed description of the community from Kashmiri Pandits to Kashmiri Hindus is unmistakably a communally motivated shift. We have already noted (in Chapter 4) that the exclusive use of the term Kashmiri Pandits had its origin in their own demand to impress upon the Mughal rulers their separate identity (and possibly loyalty) from the rest of Hindus under their rule outside Kashmir and at the same time satisfy their ego of belonging to an exceptional and the highest caste among all castes of Hindus of India. They retained and cherished this exclusivist identity all through the centuries when Kashmir passed through Muslim, Sikh and Hindu rule. However, by merging the community's identity with the rest of Hindus now, Panun Kashmir wants to tap sentiments and support of the Hindu masses of India.

The history of Kashmir all but agrees with the Kashmiri Pandits being a persecuted community since the advent of Islam in Kashmir. Notwithstanding what the community leaders might say, the Pandits were never out of power irrespective of who (Shahmirs, Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs or Dogras) were the rulers. As to Panun Kashmir's claim that the community was "facing and fighting communalism and fundamentalism since the dawn of freedom (1947)" and it will not return to "the servitude of a Muslim State," the reality perhaps lies in the hugely disproportionate number of high positions in civil and police administration Hindus occupied in the Muslim-majority State during the pre-1947 times. The situation, one might add, has not changed much since the "dawn of freedom."

Pitching for a separate homeland, leaders of the Pandit community allege that over the centuries, their number was on decline owing to

periodic forced migration. The Muslim rule in Kashmir ended in 1819 AD, but what one infers from the community literature is that the forced migration did not stop with that. One is given to understand that if it were Muslim rulers who earlier forced the Pandits to flee from Kashmir, the Muslim population continued it thereafter. Statistics on the population of the Kashmiri Pandits over a long period, however, present a different scenario. The Dogra rule is marked by holding of periodic censuses that provide an earliest insight into the total population of Kashmir and its religious texture. The first such known exercise was undertaken in 1873, and it calculated the total population of Kashmir province at 491,846.<sup>49</sup> Importantly, during the Dogra rule, Kashmir province comprised (a) Kashmir North, including Uttarmachhipora tehsil, Baramulla tehsil, Sri Pratap Singhpora tehsil (b) Kashmir South, including Tehsil Khas, Awantipora tehsil, Kulgam tehsil, Anantnag tehsil and (c) Muzaffarabad District, including Karnah tehsil, Uri tehsil and Muzaffarabad tehsil, now a part of Pakistan Administered Kashmir. The census of 1873 did not give religion-wise breakup of the population. However, the first "accurate"<sup>50</sup> census was held in 1891. It calculated the population of Hindus (of all castes) at 6.45 per cent of the total (814,241) population of Kashmir.

The percentage of the Hindu population vis-à-vis the total population of Kashmir recorded in the successive censuses of 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 stood at 5.71 (1,157,394), 4.8 (1,295,363), 4.31 (1,497,086), 4.38 (1,569,218) and 4.91 (1,728,705), respectively. It has to be borne in mind that the population of Hindus reflected in these censuses includes Hindus other than Kashmiri Pandits, especially Jammu Dogras and Punjabi traders. As such, it is difficult to have the exact number or percentage of the population of Kashmiri Pandits out of the total Hindu population of Kashmir. However, the Census of 1921 under the caste-wise breakup of literacy gives the total number of Kashmiri Pandits at 55,052. That means the community constituted 3.67 per cent of the total population of Kashmir in 1921. Now, if we look at the post-1947 scenario, we have the last census conducted in Kashmir, prior to the Pandit migration, in 1981 that calculated the total population of Hindus as 124,078 or 3.96 per cent out of the total population of 3,134,904. That is almost the same percentage

or precisely 0.29 per cent more than what it was in 1921. Even the 1941 Census data suggests a similar percentage for the Kashmiri Pandit population. Of the total population of 1,728,705 for the Kashmir province then, there were 85,538 Hindus, which included 5,846 Hindus of Muzaffarabad and 42 Scheduled Castes. Subtracting this number from the total Hindu population, we get the number of 79,692 including non-Kashmiri Hindus in the Valley. This works out to be 4.6 per cent of the total population. Subtract other Hindus in the Kashmir Valley, the percentage of Kashmiri Pandits again works out to be about 4 per cent. Based on this, if we subtract the population of non-Kashmiri Hindus from the census figures of 1901, 1911 and 1931 then the percentage of Kashmiri Pandit population vis-à-vis Kashmir's total population would be about 4 per cent.

In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we can possibly take this 4 per cent figure safely down to the beginning of the non-Muslim rule in 1819. This means that the community has retained the near 4 per cent share in total population of Kashmir at least through the last 160 years, if not more, notwithstanding the chest-beating about the alleged pre- and post-1947 (prior to 1990) persecution/shrinking of employment opportunities and resultant migrations. This is the period when allegations of persecution of the community, forcible conversion to Islam or forced eviction from Kashmir cannot stand as there were no Muslim kings around to do all this and as the Kashmiri Pandits themselves exercised real power. The allegations of persecution and discrimination during the post-1947 in the so-called Muslim State also betray the propaganda. In the words of Pradeep Magazine, the Pandit narratives, like the 'tunnel-vision perspective', recognizes only Kashmiri Brahmans as the rightful inhabitants of Kashmir and the Muslims as usurpers who, through forcible conversions, reduced them to a minority and eventually chased them out.<sup>51</sup> "In this discourse there is no place for anyone other than a 'pure, enlightened Brahmin self'."<sup>52</sup>

The allegations of constant persecution and discrimination can be analysed better through facts and figures indicative of the status and privileges the Kashmiri Pandits enjoyed during and after the Muslim rule in Kashmir. The statistics mock at Panun Kashmir's designation of Kashmir as the 'Muslim State' in whose servitude the Pandits would

not like to go. Although 'elected' governments have been in place from time to time in the Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir since 1947, with always a Muslim Chief Minister as its head, it would be outlandish to dub it as a Muslim State. Conversely, all governors or heads of the State have been Hindus. How powerful the Chief Minister of the state is has been on display time and again. Often, their proposals are consigned to the dustbins by the federal government in New Delhi, which has appropriated even a District Magistrate's authority to relax curfew in Kashmir. During the prolonged curfew<sup>53</sup> in 2016, the paramilitary CRPF refused to honour curfew passes issued by District Magistrates and told people to get "real curfew passes from [the] Government of India."<sup>54</sup> On the eve of the annual Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Adha, which fell on 13 September 2016, the Government of India instructed the State Government to "impose restrictions on the movement of people,"<sup>55</sup> a decision that a District Magistrate is supposed to take at the local level. Such incidents have often earned ridicule for a Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The federal government, at least twice in the past, has publicly undermined the authority of the State Government and the legislature it draws its powers from when it first rejected the Resettlement Act<sup>56</sup> and then the Autonomy Resolution<sup>57</sup> passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, theoretically, the second most powerful legislature in India after the Parliament. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was regarded by his people as the 'Lion of Kashmir' was so frustrated with the interference of the Indian intelligence agencies that he once told journalist Kuldip Nayyar that "They treat me like a *chaprasi* (peon)."<sup>58</sup>

How much New Delhi regards the opinion of an 'elected' Chief Minister of Kashmir is disclosed by Amarjit Singh Dulat, who was asked by the then Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Vajpayee to convey to an unwilling Farooq Abdullah that "if he's not willing to cooperate then we have our own ways of doing it."<sup>59</sup> Abdullah, the then Chief Minister, had disagreed with the Prime Minister's Office over placing Jammu and Kashmir under the Governor's rule before the 2002 State Assembly Elections. Dulat has also removed the fig leaf cover from—what in any case is firmly held public view in Kashmir—the real power that decides on who should be the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>60</sup> Prominent legal expert and author,



A. G. Noorani's comment on Dular's book, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, sums it up well:

The book reveals all too clearly how in Jammu and Kashmir the intelligence agencies subverted the democratic process with intrigue and the electoral process with bribery, and debased the quality of political life. This book reveals all too clearly that India will continue to rig elections to the Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir for as long as the Kashmir dispute is not settled with Pakistan with the consent of the people of the State. Until then, it will arrange matters to ensure two things. First, that no one occupies the office of Chief Minister without its approval. The second is commonly overlooked in the entire discourse, namely, that no Legislative Assembly that is likely to cross the well-known red lines set by New Delhi, ever since 1951, gets elected.<sup>61</sup>

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah took a long time, and years in jail, to realize and say the obvious when in 1968, he told the Urdu periodical, *Shabistan*: "Only that person who enjoys the confidence of the Government of India can be Chief Minister of Kashmir."<sup>62</sup> Thirty years later, when his son, Farooq Abdullah, as Chief Minister, announced his support for the newly installed BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government in Delhi, he told media persons that his late father had given him a parting golden advice for remaining in power: "Never be on the opposite side of the ruling party in Delhi." What Abdullahs had learnt after going through rough phases with New Delhi is corroborated by B. K. Nehru, former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, in his memoirs:

From 1953 to 1975, Chief Ministers of that State [Jammu and Kashmir] had been nominees of Delhi. Their appointment to that post was legitimised by the holding of farcical and totally rigged elections in which the Congress Party led by Delhi's nominee was elected by huge majorities.<sup>63</sup>

Syed Mir Qasim, who, as Chief Minister, made way for Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to return to power in 1975 when the latter mended fences with Indira Gandhi, made an identical observation:

“Whenever New Delhi feels a leader in Kashmir is getting too big for his shoes [sic] it employs Machiavellian methods to cut him to size.”<sup>64</sup> If any more evidence was required to establish that the person to be the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir was actually decided by New Delhi rather than the elected members of the State Assembly, Dulat has provided that by claiming that on the behalf of the Government of India, he offered Chief Ministership to separatist leader Shabir Shah. He was also the one who, in 2008, ‘foresaw’ Omar Abdullah as the next Chief Minister even when his father announced in a late night live NDTV show that he was taking oath as the Chief Minister next morning. Next morning, as we all know, Omar, not Farooq, was administered oath of office of Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir by the Governor Narinder Nath Vohra.

Now, let’s take a look at the complexion of bureaucracy and law and order machinery of this ‘Muslim State’. Muslims are virtually absent from the policy-making positions and senior echelons of civil and police administration. Before looking at the present scenario, let us first have an idea of the Hindu and Muslim representation in the administration under a Hindu Maharaja’s rule. In 1924, when the then Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, visited Kashmir, the marginalized Muslims were successful in presenting a memorandum to him while he was at a shop to see local handicrafts. The memorandum, among other injustices meted out to the majority community, apprised him about the discrimination against Muslims in government service where there were only 55 Muslim gazetted officers in comparison to 421 non-Muslims.<sup>65</sup> In 1931, of the total 558 gazetted positions, Hindus held 361 and Muslims 163. The remaining 34 were shared by Sikhs and others. Out of the total 15,429 non-gazetted jobs, Hindus had 9,281 and Muslims 4,943. Sikhs and others got the remaining 1,205. Thus, Hindus held 64.69 per cent from the gazetted and 60.15 per cent from the non-gazetted share in employment, while the majority community got only 29.21 per cent and 32.04 per cent share, respectively in the two categories.<sup>66</sup> Not to talk of Kashmir alone, 94 per cent of *patwaris* in Mirpur tehsil were Kashmiri Pandits.<sup>67</sup> The department-wise share in government jobs of non-Muslims and Muslims in 1930–31 was overwhelmingly tilted towards Hindus. In the departments of forest, customs, education, judiciary, health, revenue, treasury and police,

out of the total 2,416 employees, non-Muslims accounted for 1,547 or 64 per cent. The highest number of Muslim representation was in the police department, where out of 1,465 employees, 662 were Muslims of which 650 were from constabulary alone. The lowest Muslim representation was in the departments of forests and judiciary where 4 Muslim employees each were on the payrolls compared to 120 and 33 non-Muslims, respectively. The customs department had 9 Muslim employees, education 6, health 32, revenue 35 and treasury 13 in comparison to 150, 56, 188, 113 and 188 non-Muslim employees, respectively.<sup>68</sup> The Dogra administration was predominantly manned by non-Muslims and "the share of Kashmiri Pandits was not insignificant."<sup>69</sup>

A decade after the Glancy Commission endorsed grievances of the Muslims and recommended remedial steps, the situation remained unchanged as is evident from the statistics of 1941. In 1931, the Council of Ministers comprised five ministers, including the Prime Minister, and only one, a non-state subject, was a Muslim. In 1941, the situation was the same with different incumbents. No Muslim from the State, let alone Kashmir, was among the ministers, while a Kashmiri Pandit figured as minister each time. The governors of both Kashmir and Jammu were non-Muslims. In fact, during the period of Maharaja Hari Singh (1925–47), two Kashmiri Pandits, Hari Kishen Koul and Ram Chandra Kak, were appointed as Prime Minister, while no Muslim ever held this position during the 100-year-long (1819–1947) Dogra rule. In 1941, of the total 16 state-level heads of various departments, only 4 were Muslims.

At the provincial level, among the officers of the ranks of sessions judges, senior superintendents of police, conservators of forest, chief medical officers and inspectors of schools, only one senior superintendent of police and an inspector of schools were Muslims.<sup>70</sup> The education department continued to have Hindu preponderance in a State with 78 per cent Muslim population. As much as 74.5 per cent staff, including director education, principals, professors and lecturers, was non-Muslims. They also accounted for 65 per cent of inspectors of schools, assistant inspectors of schools and adult education officers, 69 per cent of the clerical staff of the director of education, 49 per cent of the clerical staff of the two colleges, 62 per cent of the clerical

staff of the offices of the inspectors of schools, 56 per cent of teachers of different grades, 53 per cent of the class IV staff, 51 per cent of the staff of women education wing and 70 per cent of the staff of technical education.<sup>71</sup> The Srinagar Municipal Committee represented another instance of gross discrimination against the Muslims. Of the total 84 posts, Muslims held only 22, including 1 of the 4 gazetted positions. The president, health officer, engineer, prosecutor, special officers, head clerk, overseers, draftsman and head vaccinator were all Hindus.<sup>72</sup>

If, and when, a qualified and deserving Muslim was appointed, especially on a senior position, the Pandit community would literally rise in revolt. On the appointment of two eminent educationists, Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain and Dr Muhammad Din Taseer, as Director of Education and Principal of Sri Pratap College, Srinagar, respectively, the Pandits raised a hue and cry. The opposition to their appointment was purely communal as their qualifications were unrivalled. Saiyidain's reputation as an educationist and thinker was well established. He authored several books on Indian culture and education and later rose to the position of Secretary to Government of India, Department of Education. In 1967, he was awarded the third highest Indian civilian award, Padma Bhushan, for his contribution to education sector. Taseer too was a person of no ordinary achievement. He was a poet, writer and literary critic. He had double masters from the Punjab University and the Cambridge University and doctorate from the Cambridge University, and was Principal of Islamia College, Lahore, before he came to Kashmir. He was known to be the first person from the Subcontinent to have obtained a PhD in English literature in England.

The *Martand*, a Kashmiri Pandit community newspaper, ran a smear campaign against Saiyidain and Taseer. The newspaper objected on their being non-state subjects, although several Hindu officers from outside Jammu and Kashmir were then, as earlier, heading different State departments. Incidentally, during the same year, non-state subject Hindus were appointed as Director of Industries, chief engineer, electricity, and auditor general, and the *Martand* had no problem with them.<sup>73</sup> Saiyidain's pioneering contribution to the development of education in Jammu and Kashmir has been widely recognized and his secular credentials were never questioned, but the *Martand* indulged in

a communal propaganda against him through a series of 25 articles.<sup>74</sup> He was slammed for posting highly qualified Muslims like G. A. Mukhtar, Abdul Aziz and Molvi Muhammad Hussain as headmaster of training school, assistant inspector of schools and adult education officer, respectively<sup>75</sup> against their less-qualified Hindu colleagues as these positions were considered exclusively reserved for the Hindus. The *Martand*'s case against Saiyidain included allegations as trivial as display of pictures of noted educationist Dr Zakir Hussain and poet of repute Altaf Hussain Hali in the Teachers' Training School, while no such objection was raised on photographs of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Brij Narayan Chakbast, the two noted poets, displayed at the same place.<sup>76</sup> The State Publicity Department was constrained to admonish the Editor *Martand* for his smear campaign against Saiyidain, declaring that the allegations against the Director of Education were "not true."<sup>77</sup> The unsubstantiated anti-Saiyidain campaign launched by the newspaper ruffled feathers of even the Hindu subjects of Hari Singh. The *Amar*, in an editorial piece, strongly criticized the *Martand* for its propaganda campaign against Saiyidain, accusing the newspaper of injuring common interests of people for its vested community interests. The editorial observed:

Under the above caption, a series [of articles] was published in the *Martand*. We carefully read and weighed these in the light of facts and reached to the conclusion that this propaganda is driven by vested interests alone. Neither is it related with facts nor is any national interest associated with it. We do not claim that the Director Education is a perfect human being or the only educationist but the fact cannot be denied that Khwaja Sahab's selection is the best among all those who have held this post till date. ... Introduction of adult education in the State, establishment of basic schools, pleasant changes in the education system, etc. are the creation of Khwaja Sahab's fertile mind. These initiatives are the real guarantors of public welfare. Notwithstanding this, the pointless propaganda launched against him shows that Director Sahab has been unable to meet the wishes of that special community which the *Martand* proudly represents. So far as truth is concerned the opponents have published advertisements [against Saiyiddain] in newspapers but could not produce single solid evidence in their support....

Surely, this attitude brings shame to journalism in the State. We deem it prudent to extend a friendly advice to the Editor *Martand* to realise his responsibilities and desist from sacrificing common educational interests for personal or community interests.<sup>78</sup>

What lay behind the attack on Taseer was that his appointment disturbed the appellation of three Kashmiri Pandit aspirants, professors Radha Krishen Bhan, Brij Krishen Madan and Ram Chand Pandita, who were eying this post, although none of them stood anywhere near the qualification, experience and intellectual standing of the former. On the appointment of Dr Taseer, the *Martand* predicted that the new Principal would be greeted with black flags and protest.<sup>79</sup> The newspaper virtually instigated students against Taseer by publishing the news report anticipating their resentment on the "appointment of a non-state subject as Principal."<sup>80</sup> The *Martand's* assault on Taseer was patently communal so much so that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah came out openly against the newspaper. In a public meeting held in Srinagar on 19 September 1941, Abdullah said

Newspapers and representatives of Kashmiri Pandits have poisoned the atmosphere by attacking the person of Principal Taseer. By launching personal attacks they have severely damaged a venerable and just principle. Non-state subjects have been appointed on various posts so far. One could understand the current opposition had these friends raised similar objection or even one-tenth of it on such occasions. Unfortunately, however, on the arrival of Rai Bahadur Ram Lal from outside as Director Industries old experienced hands like Pandit L. Zutshi and Mr. Kohli were deprived of their right; Mr. Naraian's arrival as Chief Engineer Electricity denied competent Hindu and Muslim engineers in the department what could have accrued to them; Mr. Nehru, whom I hold in esteem, came here as Accountant General and Pandit Parmanand's right was taken away. Moreover, if the Director Hospitals had not come from outside the post would have gone to Dr. Gwasha Lal or Vaishnavi or any other doctor from the State. Continuous import of people from outside [to man different posts] deprived locals of their right but these people [who oppose appointment

of Saiyidain and Taseer] did not care. Perhaps they were satisfied that these appointments were adding to their numbers. It is logical to conclude that their current opposition is due to something else than what meets the eye. Likewise, a Pandit daily, *Martand*, indulged in mudslinging against Director Education through a series of 24–25 articles. This also forces people to think that this organ of the Kashmiri Pandits is driven by sheer communalism and personal vilification. My advice to him [Editor] is to forthwith restrain from personal attacks.<sup>81</sup>

With such depressing scenario obtaining from various departments of the *Maharaja's* Government, the British Government in Delhi was no less biased against Kashmiri Muslims in matters of recruitment. The Department of Posts and Telegraph starkly represented this discrimination. From the seniormost position of Superintendent of Post Offices, Kashmir, down to head clerk, there was only one Muslim—a head clerk. The superintendent of post offices, postmaster, deputy postmaster, supervisor post offices, supervisor telegraph branch, sub-divisional inspector, engineering supervisor and town inspector, none represented the Muslim community. Among 111 clerks, only 22 were Muslims.<sup>82</sup> Under the Dogra rule, Walter Lawrence found

Few Pandits who were not in the receipt of pay from the State and the number of offices was legion. But though this generosity in the matter of official establishment was an enormous boon to the Pandit class, it was a curse and misfortune to the Musalmans of Kashmir, for the Pandit does not value the post for its pay, but rather for its prerequisites, and every post in the valley was quickly made a source of prerequisites.<sup>83</sup>

Post-1947, when Dogra autocracy was dislodged, the situation remained tilted against the Muslims. In 1967, out of the total 2,252 gazetted officers in Jammu and Kashmir, only 924 were Muslims who comprised 68 per cent of the total population of the State.<sup>84</sup> In 1987, there were only 5 Muslim administrative secretaries in the Civil Secretariat out of a total of 22. In the Central Government offices located in the State, the Muslims comprised 6.8 per cent officers, 13 per cent clerical staff and 15 per cent class fourth employees. The percentage of Muslim officers in the nationalized banks was a mere 1.5 per cent. Of the 222 doctors working

in various departments of the two Government Medical Colleges, only 78 were Muslims.<sup>85</sup> Forty-four years after the installation of the 'democratic rule' in Jammu and Kashmir, the situation for the majority community was no better as far as the government services were concerned.

Apart from the dismal representation of Muslims in government offices, one of the stark realities was the complete 'easing out' of the majority community from the top civil and police administration of the state. There are only two Muslim officers from the state (an additional chief secretary and a commissioner/secretary, who is due to retire this year) in the entire administrative set up, comprising, besides the governor, three advisors, a chief secretary, a financial commissioner (with chief secretary rank), five additional chief secretaries, 15 commissioners/secretaries, two divisional commissioners, two director generals (police and prisons), one additional director general (police). For this overwhelming presence of non-locals alone, the state administration was likened to the infamous East India Company.<sup>86</sup>

The State Government departments presented a dismal picture. Out of the total 12,323 gazetted officers, Muslims constituted less than half at 41.71 per cent, while in the non-gazetted and lower cadre also their number was "substantially disproportionate to their population."<sup>87</sup> The situation in the Government of India offices located in Jammu and Kashmir was far worse. Out of the total number of 1,928 officers, Muslims were only 133.<sup>88</sup> In the clerical and non-gazetted category, they constituted as little as 12.98 per cent of the total 5,060 employees, while in the class-IV category, there were only 1,212 Muslims out of a total 7,715 employees. In the nationalized banks, the percentage of Muslim officers was as minimal as 1.5 per cent.<sup>89</sup>

There were such Central government offices like the IB and other intelligence agencies where no Muslim was recruited in pursuance of an unwritten law in force since 1947. The secularists in India might hang their heads in shame to know that Muslim auditors in the Accountant General's office in Srinagar were forbidden from audit inspection of security or intelligence organisations.<sup>90</sup>

The practice remains unchanged.



Is the situation any different now? Statistics as recent as of February 2017 give an idea of Muslim representation in the higher echelons of administration in Jammu and Kashmir. Of the total 84 J&K Cadre IAS officers, only 26 are Muslims.<sup>91</sup> Of these, there is not a single Muslim among the 19 seniormost officers. Among the first 30 IAS officers, only 2 were Muslims and only 12 among the first 51. By June 2023, when Asgar Hussain Samoon, the first of the total 27 Muslim IAS officers, will reach the age of superannuation, 20 others junior to him would have already gone home. The middle rung bureaucracy comprises 514 Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers of whom Muslims at 256 constitute less than 50 per cent.<sup>92</sup> Over the past several years, the number of Muslims in the Combined Competitive Services (CCS), the feeding cadre to the KAS, is declining. Between 1995 and 2014, the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission made 1,642 selections for the CCS out of which 1,080 (over 65 per cent) were picked up from Jammu and only 538 from Kashmir, besides 24 from Ladakh.<sup>93</sup> Figures pertaining to recent years show steady decline in the selection of Muslim candidates. During the year 2011, the Muslim representation in the CCS was 64.48 per cent (253/392) which fell to 55 per cent (77/140) in 2012 (when two selection lists were issued). In 2013, the percentage slightly went up to 59.37 per cent (38/64) but fell to a low of 52.08 (50/96) in 2015. In short, between 2011 and 2015, a sharp fall of 12.46 per cent was recorded in Muslim presence in recruitment to the middle-rung State bureaucracy.<sup>94</sup> As if that was not enough, the Governor's administration on 31 March 2016 took a decision of far-reaching consequence whereby it decided that the district administration would henceforth be headed only by officers of the IAS, thereby further reducing chances of a local officer to reach a senior bureaucratic position. Jammu and Kashmir has 22 districts that were previously headed also by KAS officers. The State Administrative Council<sup>95</sup> (SAC), headed by Governor Vohra, reversed the earlier proposal of the Cabinet Subcommittee of the previous government to reserve at least eight posts of Deputy Commissioners for KAS officers. SAC also recommended increase in the cadre strength of IAS from the present 137 to 145,<sup>96</sup> and "deleted some more posts of HoDs [Heads of Departments] from the KAS Cadre."<sup>97</sup>

So far as the highest bureaucratic position is concerned, the State has had 29 Chief Secretaries since 1949. Of these, only nine were Muslims including six from Jammu and Kashmir; the last was due to retire in November 2015 but had to quit three months earlier for the humiliation of being ignored by the BJP–PDP coalition government in important policy decisions. The officer was the first Muslim to hold the post since 1994. As things stand today, no Muslim of the State, let alone Kashmir, will get to this coveted post in the foreseeable future. The situation in the police administration is worse. As of April 2016, of the total 88 J&K Cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, only 17 are Muslims, none among the first 14 seniormost officers.<sup>98</sup> Among the 222 State Police Service officers of the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police, only half are Muslims. During the last 102 years for which record is available, out of 34 Police Chiefs in the Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir, only 2 (Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah and Ghulam Jeelani Pandit) were Muslims whose collective tenure lasted for 6 years 10 months and 15 days. In Ghulam Jeelani Pandit, the State had its last Muslim Police Chief as back as in 1989.

In the case of higher judiciary, ever since it was established in 1928 during the Dogra rule, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court has seen 32 Chief Justices.<sup>99</sup> Of these, 11 were Muslims, including only 3 (Justice Mian Jal-ud-Din, Justice Mufti Baha-ud-Din and Justice Bashir Ahmad Khan) from Kashmir. Out of the 88 years since the Court came into being, the total tenure of these 3 Chief Justices lasted for 3 years 2 months and 21 days. The period is about one-sixth of the 19 years 8 months and 2 days Justice Janki Nath Wazir, a Rajput Hindu from Jammu, alone held the post from 30 March 1948 to 2 December 1967. The longest term a Kashmiri Muslim has held as Chief Justice is 2 years and the distinction was claimed by Mufti Jalal-ud-Din while Bashir Ahmad Khan's tenure lasted for 2 months and 6 days. Among the 62 judges who have served on the Bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court since its inception, Muslims accounted for 24. As of February 2017, there are only two Muslims out of eight sitting judges.<sup>100</sup>

An illustration of the Muslim power in Jammu and Kashmir is the manner in which Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers of the State

have been humiliated and cut to size by New Delhi since 1947. The summary dismissals of the State's chief executives of, what Panun Kashmir calls, the Muslim State, and replacing them with hand-picked people has made their authority a laughing stock. In 1953, Kashmir's popular political leader and the then Prime Minister of the State, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was dismissed and arrested by a 22-year old Hindu Sadr-i-Riyasat on the orders from New Delhi over a frivolous allegation.<sup>101</sup> He was replaced by Jawaharlal Nehru's handpicked Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad. Decades later, when Abdullah returned to power in 1975 after a patch-up with New Delhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi berated him and in one of her public speeches at Kathua in Jammu, she "warned him that if she wished she could remove him in a jiffy."<sup>102</sup> In early 1964, when Kashmir had erupted against the mysterious theft of the Holy Relic from Hazratbal Shrine during the intervening night of 26–27 December 1963, Prime Minister Shamsuddin was humiliated by an officer of the Government of India. He was made to wait for 40 minutes outside the State Guest House in Srinagar before granting audience by the visiting Indian Home Secretary, Vishwanathan. The Prime Minister, abandoning protocol, had gone to the Guest House to discuss urgent law and order issues with Vishwanathan.<sup>103</sup>

In 1984, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's son and the then Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, was sacked through an engineered party coup for antagonizing Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by hosting a conclave of Indian political leaders critical of her in October 1983.<sup>104</sup> He was replaced by his brother-in-law, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, who too was shown the door soon by Indira Gandhi's son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi. Former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, B. K. Nehru, holds Indira Gandhi's Kashmiri Pandit aide, Makhan Lal Fotedar, squarely responsible for poisoning her ears against Farooq. He recalls that the meeting Indira Gandhi called to decide Farooq's fate was attended, besides Fotedar, by two more Kashmiri Pandits, Tikki Koul and Baboo Haksar, none of whom held any official position. On the other hand, the Governor, the Home Minister, the Home Secretary, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary and the Director IB, who had any responsibility for Kashmir, were absent.<sup>105</sup> Indira Gandhi had asked Governor Nehru to

sack Farooq Abdullah that he refused. Recalling the incident, senior journalist M. L. Kotru writes,

When B. K. Nehru, the Governor, refused to do her behest the Prime Minister had little hesitation in ordering a change of occupancy of the Srinagar Raj Bhavan. A more pliant and a hatchet man par excellence, Jagmohan was rushed in to takeover and lo and behold Nehru was out and Jagmohan in as the Governor.<sup>106</sup>

Syed Mir Qasim once recalled in a private conversation that as Chief Minister he had almost lost his job on the complaint of an estranged Kashmiri Pandit colleague. Sham Lal Saraf had reported to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that the Chief Minister had extended protocol to and hosted at his official residence an intelligence officer from Pakistan. Gandhi was enraged and had conveyed to Qasim her anger through an aide. The fact of the matter was that a female cousin of the Chief Minister had arrived from Pakistan in connection with settling a family property issue with him. Qasim had arranged picking her up in an official vehicle at the Delhi airport and during her stay in Srinagar, the lady had put up with her cousin who happened to be the Chief Minister. Qasim refused to speak to Gandhi when her aide suggested that he should directly talk to the Madam and clarify. However, the Prime Minister on her own phoned to mollify Qasim and advised him to keep Saraf busy with some work so that he had no time to make such complaints.

Apart from dismissing chief ministers, New Delhi has been accused of rigging almost all the assembly elections held so far in Jammu and Kashmir to install acquiescent chief ministers. This is how political analyst Happymon Jacob puts it:

Successive regimes in New Delhi rigged elections in J&K, time and again, jailed many Kashmiri leaders, installed puppet regimes in Srinagar, floated all sorts of political and other outfits in the State in order to outwit the existing ones only to float newer ones to outsmart the ones floated earlier, violated human rights of Kashmiris, and killed hundreds of people in cold blood—all in the name of 'national interest'. New Delhi and the Congress Party in particular, believed, perhaps even 'genuinely', that given

the history of Jammu and Kashmir and its proximity to Pakistan, it had to keep a tab on the political activities there and even try and manipulate it so that Kashmir remains with India. But then, even genuine criminality is not absolvable [sic].<sup>107</sup>

India's former spymaster, Amarjit Singh Dulat, has simplified for us the appreciation of the status of Kashmir and its successive 'elected' governments by confirming the long held public belief that Kashmir, for all practical purposes, was run by IB. It is an open secret in Kashmir that topmost civil and police postings in the State are 'dictated' by New Delhi. In 2005, the then Chief Minister drew flak for being helpless in shifting an inspector general of police whom he wanted to transfer. Years later, when he returned to the post, he confided in a local journalist that he wanted to shift his Principal Secretary, but New Delhi wanted the officer to continue at his present position.

Kashmir must be the only 'Muslim State' with permanently a Hindu Head of the State and where the punishment for cow slaughter is harsher than in any state of India, and where there is free flow of liquor as against the Hindu Gujarat.

So far as the separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits is concerned, statistics and historical facts appear to be of no importance for those who put forward reasons for its creation. The number of '700,000 migrant Kashmiri Pandits' sought to be resettled in Kashmir, besides being fraught with severe demographic consequences, is 5.6 times more than about 125,000 Pandits who actually migrated from the Valley in 1990. Obviously, the figure of 0.7 million includes tens of thousands of Kashmiri-origin Pandits like the Nehrus, the Katjus, the Haksars and so on, whose ancestors had moved out of Kashmir in search of greener pastures during different periods of its medieval history. According to the community narrative, these Pandits came to the plains of India in order to preserve their religious identity, which was not possible for them to retain in Kashmir. However, having migrated in groups, "these Pandits maintained their group identity.... In course of time their Bachbhats, Priests and Purohits also followed them and migrated from Kashmir and settled in Agra and Delhi."<sup>108</sup> The migrating Kashmiri Brahmans chose to settle "in the Mughal capitals of Agra and Delhi than in the sacred cities of Varanasi and Prayag,"<sup>109</sup> and also preferred Persian over Sanskrit, the *devabhasha*

and the language of their scriptures, which they soon forgot. Sender talks about the migrant Pandits who selected sacred places as their settling points, when possible, “swiftly abandoned the mandir for the *darbar*.”<sup>110</sup> She quotes the instance of one Kishen Das who went from the temple along the Ganges to the fort along the Jamuna and ended up at the Mughal court. Sender is of the view that the cause of the Pandit migration was opportunity rather than oppression:

Community legends attribute the departure of the Pandits from the valley to persecution, whatever the time it occurred. However, the actual history of the few families for whom information can be found suggests instead that immigration to the plains was stimulated, for the most part, by contacts made in the course of imperial travels in Kashmir. Opportunity rather than oppression provided the impetus for migration; where there was negative element, it stemmed from personal disputes or natural disasters rather than systematic persecution.<sup>111</sup>

“Only a few [Kashmiri Pandit] families,” writes Sender, “settled permanently in Banaras and those located in Faizabad were influenced less by the proximity of Rama’s capital of Ajodhia [Ayodhya] than they were by that of the nawab’s court.”<sup>112</sup> It would be interesting to note how a non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandit, whose ancestors had moved out of Kashmir some 200 years back, views the migration of his fellow Pandits from the Valley. Markanday Katju’s, former judge of the Supreme Court of India, ancestor, Mansa Ram Katju, had migrated after obtaining job in the court of the Nawab of Jaora in Western Madhya Pradesh. In his words:

There are two kinds of Kashmiri Pandits, the Kashmiri speaking ones, and the non-Kashmiri speaking ones. The non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandits (like myself) are those whose ancestors had migrated from Kashmir valley about 200 years back. These Kashmiri Pandits all migrated in exactly the same way, that is, they got employment in some princely state, i.e. in the Court of some Maharaja or Nawab (they got such jobs as Kashmiri Pandits were highly proficient in Urdu and Persian, the Court languages). The ancestors of Pt. Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, etc. had all come from Kashmir in this way. Having left

Kashmir, they forgot the Kashmiri language after about two generations, and now know only Hindi and English (those up to my father's generation were highly proficient in Urdu, but those in my generation have forgotten it.) My estimate is that they are between one and two lacs in number. My own ancestor, Pt. Mansa Ram Katju migrated from Kashmir about 200 years ago and got service in the Court of the Nawab of Jaora. Jaora is a town in Ratlam district in western Madhya Pradesh, on the border of Rajasthan. My family lived in Jaora for several generations until my grandfather Dr. K. N. Katju moved to U.P. and settled in Allahabad. These non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiris, like my family, did not migrate from Kashmir because of persecution but because of job opportunities in the plains. My ancestor Pt. Mansa Ram Katju, who migrated from Kashmir about 200 years ago has written in Persian in the register of the *Panda* of Kurukshetra '*batalash-e-maash aamadaam*' which means 'I have come in quest of bread' (i.e. job).<sup>113</sup>

While these career-seekers are also presented as forcibly driven out Kashmiri Pandits reserving their right to return, there is no mention of tens of thousands of Muslims who were forced to leave the Valley due to the oppressive and brazenly anti-Muslim policies of the Sikh and Hindu rulers of Kashmir between 1819 and 1947. As we have observed (in Chapter 4), 111,775 such unfortunate Kashmiri Muslims had escaped to Punjab by 1891. Their descendants' right to return is not a part of the Pandits' migration narrative. Also, the return of hundreds of Muslim families who were pushed across the Line of Control by a vindictive government in Kashmir in 1947 and later, or those who crossed over to other side of the Line of Control for safety during different wars between India and Pakistan and armed conflict in Kashmir, are not talked about. Nor is the resettlement of the hundreds of thousands of Muslims of Jammu, who were driven out of the State by the Hindu Maharaja's forces and murderous groups in 1947, a subject that warrants a serious discussion. The number of such uprooted Muslims who reached Pakistan after crossing the rivers of blood and mayhem ranged between 500,000 and 600,000,<sup>114</sup> while 237,000 of their kith and kin were massacred in different parts of Jammu province.<sup>115</sup>

The politics of separate homeland is also manifested through contempt towards the struggle of Kashmiri Muslims for their political rights. The Pandit leadership categorizes its peaceful struggle for minimum basic rights under an oppressive Dogra rule as a “war against the Kashmiri Pandits, the civilization anchors of the Vedic Indian nation.”<sup>116</sup> It is a different matter that while claiming to be the civilization anchors of Vedic India, Panun Kashmir is yet to firm up its opinion on whether the community is a “part of the Vedic heartland of India” or “almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.” In the fourth paragraph of the *margdarshan* resolution of 1991, the organization talks about the Kashmiri Hindus as “a part of the Vedic heartland of India” while in the very next sentence, it describes their history as “almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.”<sup>117</sup> Anyhow, we have already observed (in Chapter 5), the Pandit leadership in 1931 tried to communalize the post 13 July 1931 situation and sabotage the Hindu Maharaja’s announcement of nominal concessions for his Muslim subjects. The day, observed by the Kashmiri Muslims as the Martyrs’ Day, is denigrated by Panun Kashmir as the ‘Black Day’, demanding that the Jammu and Kashmir Government stop observing a holiday on 13 July to commemorate the happening.<sup>118</sup> Again, for the organization, the peaceful 20-year long Plebiscite Movement launched by Kashmiri Muslims during 1960s and 1970s for the fulfilment of India’s pledges to hold a referendum in Kashmir is a “secessionist movement carried on by the fundamentalist forces.” Interestingly, the movement was mentored by and drew inspiration from secularist Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who rejected Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s two-nation theory and merger of Kashmir with Pakistan based on the religion of its majority population. Likewise, the political movement supported by armed men in 1989 to seek an end to the Indian rule is “a Muslim religious crusade.” The armed struggle was launched by a secular JKLF but was later joined by some religiously driven armed groups as well. The political face of the movement, however, remains the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, an amalgam of more than a dozen political groups, that later split into two factions.

Whatever be the politics behind the demand for a separate homeland for Pandits within Kashmir, its creation would be “nothing less than religious apartheid.”<sup>119</sup> The common perception among Muslims



in Kashmir is that there is a pattern to the synthetic allegations by Panun Kashmir against the Muslims of Kashmir, coupled with misrepresentation of history and the vehement support they are getting from the RSS and its various offshoots, including the ruling BJP. They see it as a 'sinister plan' directed at creating another Palestine in this part of the world. Uprooting millions of Muslims from their native land, which is inherent in the creation of an exclusive Hindu homeland, is akin to what Zionists did to Palestinians in 1947–48. The creation of exclusive Hindu settlements, as is proposed by the BJP Government, would be copying what the Zionist Israeli regime has been doing in the West Bank—piece by piece, but progressively, claiming and occupying more and more territory through new settlements, security campuses, exclusive roads and so on. In the absence of Article 370 that prohibits settlement of non-state subjects in Kashmir, the separate homeland or settlements will be open for non-Kashmiri Hindus, like Israeli settlements in the West Bank are open for Jews from anywhere in the world. Either of the plans suits the RSS as long as it de-Islamizes Kashmir and reclaims it as 'the Hindu land'.<sup>120</sup>

Separate homeland or separate settlements, proponents of both, like Zionists, have no consideration for the fact that Muslims proposed to be displaced are natives to the land whom they acknowledge as, once upon a time in the past, their co-religionists with a common history. An exclusive homeland or settlement for Kashmiri Hindus, viewed in historical perspective, is an endorsement, though belated, of the Muslim League's demand for the religion-based separate homeland (Pakistan) that, history bears witness, was out rightly rejected by both the Kashmiri Hindus and the RSS. In fact, it is no secret that Mahatma Gandhi was made to pay with his life for conceding to the Muslim League's demands. It does not end there. It has dangerous, indeed poisonous, future implication. In the heat of the most parochial blindness, both the demand for homeland and the plan for separate settlements overlook the precedent it would potentially create for the Muslims who are of late increasingly being displaced through orchestrated communal riots by right wing Hindu mobs in India.

The right wing leadership of the Kashmiri Pandits is seen increasingly allowing itself to be used by the Hindutva forces of India, who have no respect for truth while talking about Kashmir or its majority

community. However, the saner elements among the Pandits recognize the dangers in their community serving as a wedge for the RSS. The Pandits who stayed back in Kashmir feel that Panun Kashmir “is under the influence of pro-Hindutva political groups.”<sup>121</sup> They do not share the migration narrative of their brethren who left Kashmir in 1990 and also oppose the demand for a separate homeland for the community. Nitasha Koul<sup>122</sup> views the migrant Kashmiri Pandits as “a pawn in the hands of the Hindutva ideologues who use the Pandit issue to bash and demonise Kashmiri Muslims.” According to her, what Hindutva forces saw as the inherently traitorous nature of Kashmiri Muslims *qua* Muslims was more problematic than even a Muslim majoritarian state such as a clearly ‘Islamic’ Republic of Pakistan.<sup>123</sup>

## Notes and References

1. The organization has since split into three factions, two of which have lately sorted out their differences but retained their separate identities.
2. *Panun Kashmir: A Homeland for Kashmiri Pandits*. [www.panunkashmir.org](http://www.panunkashmir.org)
3. The figure of 700,000 for Kashmiri Pandits is way beyond 124,078 that, according to the Government of India Census of 1981, was the exact number of them living in Kashmir. Moreover, it is not that all Kashmiri Pandits migrated from the Valley; several thousand stayed put in their residences all through the militancy.
4. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution guarantees special status to Jammu and Kashmir where non-state subjects cannot acquire property and settle.
5. OneIndia, 29 April 2015. <http://newsr.in/n/India/754zww293/Kashmiri-Pandits-rehabilitation-only-possible-if-homeland-is.html>
6. Koul, *Identity Politics of Kashmiri Pandits*, 270.
7. *Greater Kashmir*, 29 January 2016.
8. Riyaz Wani, *Tehelka.com*, 2 July 2012. <http://www.tehelka.com/sas-geelani-opposes-separate-settlement-for-kashmiri-pandits/>
9. *Ibid.*
10. Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, hand-out dated 14 July 2014. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=106628>
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12. PTI, 28 April 2015, *Times of India*, online edition. <http://timesofindia.india-times.com/india/50-acres-of-land-to-be-kept-for-Kashmiri-pandits-in-valley/articleshow/47085162.cms>
13. *Greater Kashmir*, 30 December 2013.
14. R Upadhyay, *RSS & Kashmir: Battle for Integration*. <http://the.kashmirtelegraph.com/rss.htm>

15. Ibid.
16. *Organiser*, "Importance of Kashmir," 6 November 1947.
17. Ibid.
18. Upadhyay, *RSS & Kashmir: Battle for Integration*. <http://the.kashmirtelegraph.com/rss.htm>
19. Ved Bhasin in an interview published in *The Kashmir Ink*, dated 20 December 2015.
20. Ibid.
21. *Resolving Kashmir Issue, Absolute Truth*. <http://absolutetruth.in/forums/topic/resolving-kashmir-issue>
22. Ibid.
23. *Kashmir Life*, "BJP wants land for troops in Kashmir." <http://www.kashmirlife.net/bjp-wants-land-for-troops-in-jk-82233/>
24. *Kashmir Reader*, 16 August 2015.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 2 September 2015.
29. *The Economic Times*, 11 May 2016.
30. Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's PDP fought the State Assembly elections in 2014 on the plank of keeping BJP out of power but, after the elections threw up a hung assembly, joined hands with it to form a coalition government. For this, Syeed was accused of 'sell out of Kashmir'.
31. Professor Showkat Hussain, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
32. Professor Noor Ahmad Baba, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
33. Shakeel Qalandar, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
34. *Greater Kashmir*, 8 May 2016.
35. *The Indian Express*, 7 February 2017.
36. Available at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-omar-abdullah-warns-against-ghettoisation-of-kashmiri-pandits-2075802>
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Wani, *Tehelka.com*, 2 July 2012. <http://www.tehelka.com/sas-geelani-opposes-separate-settlement-for-kashmiri-pandits/>
40. Ibid.
41. PTI, 6 July 2015. Along with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Mukherjee is considered the godfather of Hindu nationalism in India, especially the Hindutva movement. He died as a prisoner in Jammu and Kashmir in 1953 where he had gone to agitate against the special constitutional status enjoyed by the State.
42. Basharat Masood, *The Indian Express*, 29 May 2016.
43. Ibid.
44. *Greater Kashmir*, 8 June 2016.
45. Ibid. Tihar Jail is the largest prison complex in South Asia, located in New Delhi.

46. *Greater Kashmir*, 9 June 2016.
47. OneIndia, 29 April 2015. <http://newsr.in/n/India/754zwv293/Kashmiri-Pandits-rehabilitation-only-possible-if-homeland-is.html>
48. Ibid.
49. In 1868, a census was taken of the population of Srinagar, but its accuracy was doubted (Lawrence).
50. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 224.
51. Pradeep Magazine, *The Hindu* [Debate], 8 February 2013.
52. Ibid.
53. The first relaxation of round-the-clock curfew was announced after 51 days. However, it was soon reimposed.
54. *Greater Kashmir*, 20 August 2016.
55. *The Hindu* online, 9 September 2016. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-asks-jk-to-impose-section-144-during-aidulazha/article9091172.ece>
56. The operation of the Resettlement Act was stayed by the Supreme Court of India in 2002 on a petition filed by Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party leader, Bhim Singh, who had pleaded that the Act would become a tool for the entry "of terrorists" into the State and the implementation of the Act would threaten the unity and integrity of the State. The Government of India while disposing before the Apex Court shared Singh's "apprehensions". Earlier, in 2001 the Supreme Court had "respectfully" returned a Presidential reference on the Act saying it was inexpedient for the Court to answer the questions posed in the reference. The Bill was twice passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and also assented to by the Governor.
57. In 2000, Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed with two-thirds majority a resolution demanding restoration of autonomy for the State guaranteed under the Indian Constitution but which had been eroded over a period of time since 1964. The resolution was summarily rejected by the federal government in Delhi without even discussing it with the State Government.
58. Professor Gull Wani, *Greater Kashmir*, 24 July 2016.
59. Dulat, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, 237.
60. Ibid., 236–37.
61. A. G. Noorani, "India's Failure in Kashmir," *Frontline*, 7 August 2015.
62. *Shabistan*, January 1968.
63. Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 686.
64. Quoted by Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 484.
65. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 111.
66. Ministry of State Government of India, "Facts about Kashmir," File No. 8 (25)-KJ/49, 4.
67. Report by Major General, Finlayson, G.O.C., Mirpur, dated 17 February 1932, Political Department, File No.1/29/870, 1932, JKA-J.
68. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir* (1931–1940), 120.
69. Ibid.
70. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 11 August 1941.

71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 10 October 1941.
73. Ibid., 11 September 1941.
74. Ibid., 1 October 1941.
75. *Martand*, 22 August 1941.
76. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 1 October 1941.
77. Ibid., 17 October 1941.
78. *Amar*, 12 September 1940; reproduced by *Weekly Khalid* on 20 September 1941.
79. *Martand*, 20 September 1941.
80. Ibid.
81. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 20 September 1941.
82. Ibid., 4 August 1941.
83. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 401.
84. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 186.
85. Ibid., 192.
86. Khalid Ahmad, "Kashmir: More Sinned Against," *The Illustrated Weekly*, 19–25 October 1991.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. List of IAS Officers, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, General Administration Department website ([www.jkgad.nic.in](http://www.jkgad.nic.in)), accessed on 15 February 2017.
92. List of KAS Officers, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, General Administration Department website ([www.jkgad.nic.in](http://www.jkgad.nic.in)) accessed on 15 February 2017.
93. *Daily State Times*, Jammu, 24 January 2017.
94. No selection was made in 2014.
95. Jammu and Kashmir was placed under the Governor's Rule on 10 January 2016, seventh time since 1947, following the death of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The SAC decision came on a day when it was announced that a new Chief Minister will be sworn in after four days.
96. *Greater Kashmir*, 1 April 2016.
97. Ibid. The KAS Officers Association sharply reacted to slashing the strength of the KAS cadre.
98. Jammu and Kashmir Police official website <http://jkpolice.gov.in/notifications/gradation-list-of-ips-cadre.htm>, accessed on 15 February 2017.
99. Jammu and Kashmir High Court website [[www.jkhighcourt.nic.in](http://www.jkhighcourt.nic.in)] accessed on 15 February 2017.
100. Ibid.
101. Abdullah was accused of hobnobbing with the United States for securing independence of Kashmir from Indian rule. The allegation was never established.

102. Ahmad, *My Years with Sheikh Abdullah: Kashmir 1971–1987*, 75.
103. Bhat, *Kashmir 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 106.
104. Although the Opposition Conclave was the real cause of Indira Gandhi's anger against Farooq, he was accused of anti-national activities and also being behind an ugly incident in which a group of people at the Indira Gandhi's public meeting in Srinagar lifted their *pherans* and exhibited their nakedness.
105. Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 709.
106. Greater Kashmir, "Making Sense of Power Vacuum," 29 January 2016.
107. Happymon Jacob, *Greater Kashmir*, 11 April 2011.
108. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 102.
109. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 35.
110. Ibid., 47–48.
111. Ibid., 36.
112. Ibid., 48.
113. Markanday Katju's Facebook post on 7 October 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/justicekatju/posts/1054589161248296>
114. Dawn, 2 January 1951; Gurmani, *Kashmir: A Survey*, 7.
115. *The Times of London*, 10 October 1948.
116. *Early Times*, 12 July 2015.
117. Panun Kashmir, Resolution adopted on 28 December 1991 at Jammu. <http://www.panunkashmir.org/margdarshan.html>
118. Chrungoo, Ashwani Kumar, *The Early Times*, 19 June 2015.
119. Trembley, "Nation, Identity and the Intervening Role of the State: A Study of Secessionist Movement in Kashmir."
120. *Organiser*, "Importance of Kashmir," 6 November 1947.
121. Hassan, "Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?" 8.
122. Nitasha Koul is a novelist and Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations at Westminster University. For speaking her mind on Kashmir in non-communal terms, Koul was subjected to abuse, slander and wild accusations, including being dubbed as a "representative of the Pakistani Embassy, pro-Jihadi, ISIS supporter and blot on Hinduism." She also received threats of death and legal action. The 'trolls' also called her a prostitute, a whore, daughter of a bitch and a victim of Love Jihad for being on the side of truth. Nitasha Koul, "Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn in the Games of Hindutva Forces," *The Wire*, 7 January 2016.
123. Koul, "Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn," *The Wire*.

## Chapter Nine

# Media

There exists in Kashmir a widespread distaste for its portrayal by the 'fourth pillar' of the Indian democracy. For many decades now, the mainstream Indian media is blamed for misrepresentation of Kashmir. Talk to anyone in the Valley and he will tell you that the stories to the discredit of Kashmir and its inhabitants are largely a media creation. It is accused of not only generating but also circulating tales of demonization of Kashmir's majority community, especially after the eruption of militancy and migration of Kashmiri Pandits. Although this negative representation, particularly by the electronic media, was prominently observable post-1989, Kashmir's experience with partial journalism has rather a long history.

When, in 1904, Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq<sup>1</sup> sought permission to start a newspaper from Srinagar, Pratap Singh, the third-generation Dogra ruler, was not pleased. He asked his Prime Minister to draft rules that would disallow even consideration of such a request in future.<sup>2</sup> For about three decades, nobody made another attempt until 1932, when a Kashmiri Pandit political activist, Prem Nath Bazaz, was permitted to publish the first newspaper, *Vitasta*, from Kashmir. It lasted less than a year "mainly owing to the hostility of the reactionary [Kashmiri] Hindus who tried to suppress it by every means at their command."<sup>3</sup> Eight years prior to this, Mulk Raj Saraf had been allowed to start from Jammu the *Ranbir*, a weekly named after the predecessor and father of Pratap Singh. Earlier, he had been informed that "Maharaja Bahadur has ordered that no newspaper would be allowed to publish in the State."<sup>4</sup> A minister had then intervened and impressed upon the ruler that a newspaper might, in fact, prove helpful for his government. Saraf was asked to write only on matters related with industry, economy, trade and education.<sup>5</sup> Obviously,

the *Ranbir* could not grow into more than "a supporter of the feudal system and eulogiser of the Maharaja."<sup>6</sup>

On 13 July 1931, when the Dogra army gunned down 22 civilians in Srinagar and the Muslims launched an agitation to demand basic rights, Kashmir had no newspaper to report the ground situation. The mantle fell on newspapers published from neighbouring Lahore in Punjab. These newspapers were divided into two camps of the 'Hindu Press' and the 'Muslim Press' on the basis of religion practiced by their owners and their support to politics of the respective community. Newspapers like the *Zamindar*, the *Inqilab*, the *Siyasat*, the *Alfaaz* and the *Lahore Chronicle* formed the 'Muslim Press' and took up the cause of Kashmiri masses. At one point in time, these periodicals were banned from the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, although some copies would clandestinely reach Srinagar in the baggage of travellers on the Rawalpindi–Srinagar Road.

On the other hand, newspapers like the *Tribune*, the *Pratap*, the *Milap*, the *Amar* and the *Guru Ghantaal* comprised the 'Hindu Press' and took the side of the Maharaja of Kashmir. These newspapers ran a smear campaign against Kashmiri Muslims for asking from their ruler equality before law with the Hindu minority. Justice system was heavily tilted in favour of the ruler's co-religionist subjects, and the quantum of punishment for a crime was directly related to the faith of the accused. Muslim peasants, 80 per cent of Kashmir's population, had been dispossessed of their land and converted into beasts of burden, requisitioned, as they were in hordes, for forced unpaid labour. Education and employment were denied to them. Under such oppressive conditions, when they demanded equal treatment with Hindu compatriots, they were seen as conspiring against their ruler. The newspapers also published special 'Kashmir Numbers', carrying biased reports and articles demeaning of them and their leaders.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in particular, bore the brunt of vilification. In one of its issues, the *Milap*, Lahore, published a slanderous news report, credited to an "informed source," under the title, "Kashmir's Bacha Saqa:<sup>7</sup> Who is Master Abdullah who Started Agitation in Kashmir?" Intriguingly, the story was reproduced verbatim by the *Pratap*, Lahore, the next day albeit with a changed headline,



"The Founder of Kashmir Rebellion: Interesting Antecedents of Master Abdullah." The news report reads:

[He is] an ugly looking person who has spoiled the peaceful atmosphere of Kashmir [and] whose name is Master Abdullah. He shaves his beard and moustache, wears pant and dons a Bacha Saqa style cap. Whether he loves Islam or not is evident from his appearance. It is heard that Master Abdullah resides in Soura (Kashmir). Some say he is the son of a fisherman while some say his father was a danner. After doing M. Sc. from Aligarh he worked as a science teacher in a Kashmir Government High School on a salary of Rs. 80 per month.<sup>8</sup> Since he was an agitator his stay in Srinagar was not deemed proper so he was transferred to Muzaffarabad. But he refused to go there and the Education Department dismissed him from service for his noncompliance [of orders]. After his dismissal, Master Abdullah started spreading mischief and delivers speeches regularly. Now hardly a day passes when he does not make a speech at one or the other place. His speeches inject poison in Muslims. About his grandfather also it is heard that he was the main leader when the Sunni Muslims looted the Shias. Since Abdullah continues to instigate people there is a rumour that he will be arrested soon. It is reported that he has designated some Jalal as his successor so that the propaganda is continued unabated in his absence.<sup>9</sup>

The *Milap* also published a report about a calendar in circulation in Kashmir, depicting a colour picture of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in a contemplative mood. The caption of the picture reads: "Kashmiri Gandhi in deep thought about the betterment of Kashmiri Muslims." The newspaper felt uncomfortable with the caption and suggested that the picture should have been appropriately titled as "Bacha Saqa, the destroyer of Kashmir's peace."<sup>10</sup>

The spiteful reporting of the events in Kashmir and dubbing the people's movement for basic rights as communal agitation by the 'Hindu Press' left the victims of the Dogra rule and their sympathizers aghast. These newspapers presented affairs of Kashmir in a manner as if Muslims were after the blood of their Hindu ruler and were out to establish Muslim rule in Kashmir. The propaganda had its impact and Sikhs in Punjab pledged support to the Maharaja. The Shiromani

Akali Dal assured him of its help and termed the Kashmir trouble as having been started "only to increase the power of the Muslims."<sup>11</sup> The Akali wrote that "the trouble is led by such people who want to see the establishment of an Islamic State in North India."<sup>12</sup> On 12 August 1931, the newspaper wrote:

We cannot but advise Maharaja Sahab and Raja Hari Kishen Koul to not be intimidated by the threats of these miscreant Muslims and display courage. If you are determined then peace will automatically return to Kashmir and if you start bowing before them then these people will ride on your head.

Ironically, on the one hand, the 'Hindu Press' was vociferously fighting for political rights of Indians under the British rule and, on the other, was against extension of minimum basic rights to the Muslims under a Hindu ruler. Their struggle for their rights was projected as communal agitation and an attempt to establish an 'Islamic State'. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, an influential pro-Kashmir voice in British India, had to come out in the open and deny any communal angle to the Kashmir agitation. He blamed the 'Hindu Press' for making this propaganda.<sup>13</sup> At a public meeting at Lahore on 14 August 1931, he clarified that Kashmiris were fighting for their rights and lifting of restrictions on their religious liberty. "They want religious freedom in the same measure as is available to Hindu subjects in Muslim princely states,"<sup>14</sup> Iqbal explained, only to be accused of instigating an armed struggle against the Hindu ruler of Kashmir.

In its support for an autocrat, the 'Hindu Press' indulged in character assassination of Kashmiris and even advised the ruler on how to deal with them. The unarmed protesters fell in the scores to bullets, while the newspapers portrayed their peaceful resistance as 'armed rebellion'. In a travesty of truth, the oppressed people were projected as oppressors. Some newspapers published cartoons that showed Kashmiri Muslims armed with spears setting buildings on fire, looting markets and snatching rifles from police and army. A cartoon even depicted a Kashmiri Muslim murdering a 'Brahman girl'.<sup>15</sup> The 'Hindu Press' made no bones about fighting a media war for the ruler of Kashmir. Every pro-Kashmir voice was literally pounced upon. Besides Allama Iqbal becoming a target of vicious

campaign, the *Statesman* and the *Civil and Military Gazette*, owned and edited by non-Muslims, faced the wrath of their own comrades in profession for trying to balance reporting on Kashmir. The two newspapers were lambasted by fellow journalists for 'anti-Maharaja writings'.<sup>16</sup> The Punjab Government was asked to take notice of their reporting, almost suggesting penal action against them. A demand was made to invoke the Princes Protection Act against those who spoke or wrote against the Maharaja of Kashmir.

The bias against Kashmiris flowed through every word brought out by these newspapers. They were threatened with serious consequences if they went against the ruler. Threats held out by a Kashmiri origin member of the Punjab Assembly, Raja Narinder Nath, and leaders of the right wing Hindu Mahasabha, B. S. Moonje and Vijaya Raghucharya were prominently published. The trio warned of revenge actions against Muslim rulers of Bhopal and Hyderabad in case agitation in Kashmir was not stopped forthwith.<sup>17</sup> The *Milap*, in a signed editorial, threatened boycott of Kashmiri goods and disallowing their sale in Indian cities to economically cripple the Valley. Non-participation in the agitation against the Hindu ruler was the only means of safety that they could 'ignore at their own peril', the newspaper warned.<sup>18</sup>

The 'Hindu Press' had, among its sources in the Valley, the pro-Maharaja Kashmiri Pandits and Punjabi Hindu traders settled in Kashmir by Dogra rulers. The former constituted the Dogra officialdom and the latter controlled business in Kashmir. Both had vested interest in the continuity and strength of the autocratic rule. They passed on to Lahore rumours and factually incorrect reports for publication. Among them was reporter Gwasha Lal Koul, allegedly on the payroll of the Kashmir Government, who filed twisted dispatches. He also wrote a defaming article about Iqbal in the *Tribune*.<sup>19</sup> Jia Lal Kilam was another Pandit who wrote for these newspapers. News stories and write-ups based on dispatches and feedbacks of motivated reporters communalized a political agitation and made it look like a war between Hinduism and Islam. The right wing Hindu forces in India strengthened this perception. The fact of the matter was that there was an oppressor on the one side and an oppressed population on the other, and the two incidentally belonged to different faiths.

To counter the propaganda and present a 'real picture of Kashmir', some educated Muslim youth, including Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas and Shoorish Kashmiri, using pseudonyms for fear of reprisal, wrote about the ground situation and secretly sent their reports to Lahore for publication. The *Inqilab* took the lead role in highlighting their dispatches. Its editor, Abdul Majid Saalik, made the contributors from Kashmir to "take an oath on the holy Qur'an that they would not mix an iota of falsehood in their reports."<sup>20</sup> On his part, he promised them that under no circumstances he would disclose their identity. Once a magistrate visited his office and demanded the names of these contributors and original copies of their dispatches which Saalik refused. He argued that he was responsible for the contents of his newspaper and offered himself for arrest. When the magistrate left, he called for all dispatches from Kashmir and consigned them to fire.<sup>21</sup> The Kashmir Government felt itchy by these reports.

In the meanwhile, two newspapers, namely the *Hamdard* and the *Martand*, were started in Srinagar in 1935. The former was jointly run by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz "to lay the foundation of progressive nationalism in the State."<sup>22</sup> However, Abdullah and Bazaz soon fell apart and the newspaper was taken over by the latter. In 1946, when the Quit Kashmir Movement against the Dogra rule was launched by Abdullah, his National Conference alleged that at Prime Minister Ram Chandra Kak's behest the *Hamdard* was siding with the government.<sup>23</sup> The *Martand* represented the Kashmiri Pandits and identified itself with their politics. The community considered it as a 'sacred duty' to keep the newspaper running through monetary donations.<sup>24</sup> At one point in time, Gwasha Lal Koul was its editor. By 1947, over two dozen newspapers were published from Kashmir, but only few like the *Hamdard*, the *Roshni* and the *Khidmat* survived. However, the plight of Kashmiri Muslims continued to be reflected more by the Lahore's 'Muslim Press' than the newspapers from Kashmir because there was strict censorship in Kashmir and periodicals were banned on trivial issues.

After the Partition, the vernacular press in Kashmir slowly progressed and Kashmir began to be reported upon in an objective manner internally. The emergence of the *Aftab* in 1958 and the *Srinagar Times*

in 1969 improved the media scenario, but the problem was that these newspapers were circulated within Kashmir only. The outside world still depended on the non-Kashmiri media for information about the Valley. So far as national, international and official media in Kashmir was concerned, Kashmiri Pandit community held monopoly on journalism. One would hardly find a Muslim reporter representing these sections of media. Mohammad Sayeed Malik, in late 1960s, was the first local Muslim correspondent to report for an Indian newspaper, the *Patriot*. Till 1983, he held this distinction when Yusuf Jameel joined the *Telegraph*, Calcutta. UNI and PTI, two Indian wire services, in Srinagar too were manned by members of the Pandit community.

The Indian Press in general inherited partiality in covering Kashmir from its Lahore predecessor. Reporting of major events like the movement launched by the Plebiscite Front (1955–75),<sup>25</sup> the Holy Relic Movement (1963–64),<sup>26</sup> the Pandit Agitation (1967), communal tension in Anantnag (1986), formation of the Muslim United Front (MUF) and Assembly Elections (1987) and the post-1989 developments, apart from routine events, was conspicuously partial and, in certain cases, provoked reaction outside Kashmir. It “chose to overlook the sentiment of people of the valley in whichever way it appeared, and selectively highlighted the developments that suited the official narrative.”<sup>27</sup> That, unfortunately, was true about all these past decades since 1947. Journalists who tried to objectively write about Kashmir were always in minority, and suffered criticism and allegations of going against the national interest.

The Srinagar-based reporters of the Indian news outlets had an identical angle of looking at and reporting developments. According to Mohammad Sayeed Malik, they “worked with the assumption of being the defenders of India’s national interest in Kashmir.”<sup>28</sup> This underlying assumption came through their reporting whenever issues and events of that kind came to be reported or commented upon. They toed the official line while reporting on events and developments. During the Holy Relic agitation and through the years of reporting on the Plebiscite Front, “almost the entire crowd toed the official line even while reporting detailed day-to-day facts about ground situation.”<sup>29</sup> On the whole, they treated the Plebiscite Front as a ‘hostile’ object for reporting. The angularity in day-to-day reporting on the Holy Relic

agitation originated from Srinagar-based Kashmiri reporters, all of whom happened to be Kashmiri Pandits. This, Malik holds, continued for long until “a few editors in New Delhi like S. Mulgaonkar of the *Hindustan Times*, Frank Moreas of the *Indian Express* and Nikhil Chakravarty of the influential left-leaning weekly, *Mainstream*, took a somewhat balanced position over the Plebiscite Front issue.”<sup>30</sup> Partial reporting about the Plebiscite Front had led Indian public to see ‘an evil’ in Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and when, in 1975, he was returned to power after disbanding the Plebiscite Front, they were taken by total surprise.

On Kashmir, there has always been difference between outlook and perspective of local and non-local journalists. This difference changed the context of reporting and comment accordingly. Mohammad Sayeed Malik, who has reported and written about Kashmir for over four decades, believes that the “non-Kashmiri journalists who work for establishments based in the Union capital and beyond come here with a mindset shaped by the Government of India’s official line of thinking on men and matters.”<sup>31</sup> According to him, this ‘fundamental rider’ has to be kept in mind while assessing or comparing their reporting from Kashmir. “Psychologically most but certainly not all of them feel as being ‘guardians of India’s national interest’ in a troubled border state.”<sup>32</sup> This mindset reflects on reporting from Kashmir. It had been like that and would be so in future too, Malik believes.

Throughout the period preceding 1990, local reporters of outside newspapers and news agencies remained friendly with the establishment. They hardly came into conflict with government over the issues of reporting, and sourced information mostly from official handouts and police and CID versions. The State Information Department and the Coffee House, where visitors drank more gossip than hot beverage, were their spots of information gathering and sharing. The negative fallout of friendly reporting by ground reporters in an “overzealous patriotic conduct,” according to Malik, was that the public opinion in India was taken in to believe that things were going smoothly in Kashmir. This mindset reflected on reporting especially about frequent clashes between government forces and Muslim protesters, whether demanding plebiscite or uninterrupted electric supply. Journalist Ghulam Nabi Khayal observes that whether during the Holy Relic

Movement or the Pandit Agitation, the reporters "never lagged behind in branding Kashmiri Muslims as anti-India and pro-Pakistan community."<sup>33</sup> Kashmir was painted in dark colours whenever it hit the headlines politically, Khayal feels. Their stories "always smacked anti-Muslim bias in one way or another."<sup>34</sup> Yusuf Jameel who shot to prominence through his reporting of Kashmir for the BBC in the early 1990s, too, talks about bias in reporting during the period prior to eruption of militancy. "Much before the outbreak of insurgency in 1989, some reporters would seek to attribute killing in police firing during street protests to cross-firing."<sup>35</sup> On numerous occasions, incidents and events would be downplayed or overplayed depending on their nature. "Sometimes, an event or development worth reporting was just ignored for obvious reasons." Barring a few exceptions, "their reporting style and actual reporting were totally disappointing."<sup>36</sup>

During this period, reporting in most part was 'cyclostyle journalism'. A copy drafted by one journalist would land at multiple news desks in New Delhi with different by-lines. In those days, journalists would send their stories through the Telegraph Department and the concerned operator at the Central Telegraph Office in Srinagar would, as asked, transmit identical copy to different recipients with changed addresses. Some would make a couple of changes here and there, mainly in the intro. As for accountability, a stringer representing two widely regarded English newspapers, one each from North India and South India, got away with reporting, and the newspapers publishing in detail, two 'major events' that had never happened. One of these was an address to the troops by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during her visit to Leh that she had cancelled because of inclement weather. The reporter was known to fiddle with figures and hard facts, what Yusuf Jameel says, "to increase his payment as per wordage prospects."<sup>37</sup> In reporting accidents and natural calamities also, he would report casualty figures much higher than the actual toll to ensure that his copy was not substituted by that of a wire service.

The coverage of the Pandit Agitation in 1967, launched over a community girl marrying her Muslim colleague, exposed Indian mainstream newspapers' bias. A personal matter between two consenting individuals, which was neither the first nor the last intercommunity marriage in Kashmir, was communalized by the Press. "Not

only the day-to-day event coverage of the agitation but even the facts of the case came to be distorted in newspaper reporting, mainly those filed for national newspapers and news agencies across India," recalls Mohammad Sayeed Malik.<sup>38</sup> The coverage, he says, betrayed manipulated uniformity to shape and direct its reaction. Only a few visiting journalists like Inder Malhotra, who represented the *Statesman*, "reported the 'other side' of the story."<sup>39</sup> The Srinagar-based correspondents filed elaborate and out of proportion reports, forcing a liberal Kashmiri Pandit leader like Prem Nath Bazaz to accuse them of "circulating exaggerated and untruthful items with anti-Muslim slant."<sup>40</sup> Reports filed by these journalists on day-to-day happenings used to be generally in line with India's 'national interest' and were one of the several main reasons why the newspaper reading public across India remained ignorant about ground realities in Kashmir. Chief Minister G. M. Sadiq, a diehard Indian and his successor Syed Mir Qasim (as we have already observed in Chapter 6) were aghast by these twisted reports.

Sadiq was not the only Chief Minister to have lamented partial reporting by the 'National Press'. Others too had serious complaints. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was often "misquoted and misrepresented" by Srinagar-based journalists whose bias against him sprang from the Land Reforms Act, which he enacted in the State to return land to tillers who in Kashmir happened to be Muslims.<sup>41</sup> Ghulam Mohammad Shah had to swallow lot of bitter reporting by a 'motivated' press before his ouster by Rajiv Gandhi. Farooq Abdullah had the worst experience. During a media onslaught on him in 1987, burning of the State Congress Party office in Srinagar was editorially captioned by the *Hindustan Times* as "Srinagar on fire."<sup>42</sup> A PTI report prominently carried by newspapers, accused Farooq of leading his supporters to the Congress office, insinuating that he was behind setting the building on fire. At the time of the incident, the Chief Minister was campaigning at Verinag, about 70 km from Srinagar. Sensationalizing the occurrence, the PTI report also claimed that the "fate of over 100 Congress (I) workers including the former Union Minister and party candidate from the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, Mohammed Shafi Qureshi, who were trapped inside the building was not immediately known."<sup>43</sup> "No one," wrote Arun Shourie



in his investigative story in the *India Today*, "was trapped inside the building at any stage."<sup>44</sup> With photographic evidence, he established that the fire in the building was an inside job. Farooq believed, and many in Srinagar concurred, that New Delhi newspapers furthered the agenda of Indian Establishment when it came to reporting on Kashmir. Slant in news stories or distortion of facts on the ground related to a particular event was not uncommon. "Sometimes even ethnic and religious bias would creep in,"<sup>45</sup> observes Yusuf Jameel.

Apart from targeting political leadership of Kashmir, the Indian mainstream media also ran a campaign against senior officers of the State belonging to the majority community. Such was the intensity of the campaign that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who had just returned to power after 22 years, lost trust in these officers. His then Principal Secretary, Ghulam Ahmad, later recalled the development thus:

At the outset, the Sheikh did not trust officers and looked upon them with suspicion, especially senior Muslim officers, because of an orchestrated campaign of vilification carried out by Delhi English press dominated in so far as press corps based in the state was concerned by members from one particular community. Series of articles appeared in the Delhi English press against these officers and the *piece de resistance* was a highly provocative article in the Calcutta magazine, SUNDAY, supposed to be well above the common run of magazines, which appeared on the death of Abdullah containing, inter alia, unmistakable insinuations and innuendoes direct[ed] against the senior Muslim officers.<sup>46</sup>

Reporting on Kashmir during 1986–87 again brought to the fore partiality of the Indian mainstream press. In an atmosphere of communal tension following unlocking of the Babri Mosque and an issue arising out of allotting a small space for Muslim employees in the Civil Secretariat at Jammu for offering prayers, there were incidents of violence against some Kashmiri Muslims there in February 1986. News about these incidents, along with few injured passengers, reached Kashmir with rumours that some truck drivers from Anantnag were killed in Jammu. The rumours triggered a communal situation and

some attacks by miscreants on property and religious places of the minority community at a few places in Anantnag. Media blew these incidents out of proportion and presented the situation as highly explosive, where the Kashmiri Pandits were migrating from the Valley out of fear.

The migration stories were circulated irrespective of the fact that the Government of India had informed the Parliament that no individual or community migration had taken place. The *Hindustan Times* reported allotment of a storeroom for Muslim employees as "an old temple in the Jammu Secretariat which was in disuse had been converted into a mosque."<sup>47</sup> It also reported that "an attempt was made to burn a family of a particular [Pandit] community at Nowgam bypass"<sup>48</sup> in Srinagar, without quoting any source or identifying the family. Makhan Lal Bhat, a local resident, categorically refutes any such incident having taken place in the area.<sup>49</sup> Abdul Majid, who resides at Nowgam Bypass since 1985, also rubbishes the allegation.<sup>50</sup> Alarmed by media reports, prominent social activist Baba Amte rushed to Kashmir and after visiting the 'affected places', found a vast gap between what was reported and what he found on the ground.<sup>51</sup> State's Director General of Police commended Muslims of Anantnag for protecting Kashmiri Pandits<sup>52</sup> and the Hindu Prabhandak Committee denied that the Jamat-i-Islami, accused by a section of the media of being behind the communal violence, had any role in it.<sup>53</sup>

In 1987, the media repeated the act. Some political parties, including the Jamat-i-Islami, the Itihadul Muslimeen and the Ummat-i-Islami, had joined hands to form an alliance called the MUF to fight assembly elections as a united opposition. The MUF was successful in attracting people in large numbers and hold impressive rallies. The development unnerved traditional political parties like the ruling the National Conference and the Indian National Congress which were in coalition. In the form of the MUF, here was a political alliance led by leaders like Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the present Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (G), coming forward to try electoral politics and the media, like the ruling coalition, not ready to give it any space. An impression was created that the MUF was anti-India and, once in majority in the State Assembly, would annul the accession of Kashmir to India. It was also criticized for asking Muslims to

"follow the tenets of Islam."<sup>54</sup> On its part, the MUF did not dispel this impression, for it thought the accusation would enhance its electoral prospects. The media dubbed the alliance as a combination of 'fanatical' and 'fundamentalist' organizations and helped this impression go around.

The *Hindustan Times* in an editorial article "The Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir" described the MUF's electoral battle as "more of a war between Islam and *Kufr* [infidelity]."<sup>55</sup> A picture of Kashmir overwhelmed by Islamic fundamentalism was sought to be circulated. Even pro-India National Conference leader Saifuddin Soz, demanding reservation for Kashmiris in professional colleges, was accused of having "echoed fundamentalists."<sup>56</sup> In its tirade against the MUF, Indian media failed to take notice of the contradictions it was committing in reporting. Qazi Nisar's *Ummat-i-Islami*, a constituent of the MUF was simultaneously "fanatical and fundamentalist" and "clear that the accession of the State [Jammu and Kashmir] to India was final."<sup>57</sup>

An atmosphere of suspicion and contempt was created about the MUF, only to be followed by large-scale rigging in elections in which its candidates were not only defeated by electoral fraud but also many along with their election agents, including the later day insurgent commanders like Syed Salahuddin and Mohammad Yasin Malik, were arrested and tortured in police stations. "The very fact that in the constituencies where MUF candidates had shot into initial leads on the first day of counting, counting was suspended and results declared after four or five days, which suggested that the ruling party had done 'some mischief'."<sup>58</sup> Many political analysts emphasize that this electoral deceit led to wide public disillusionment and outrage that, two years later, burst into militancy in Kashmir. However, to build a narrative that Kashmir was slipping into pro-Pakistan hands, reporters proved themselves to be far removed from history. In order to prove that Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was on "tenterhooks" owing to pro-Pak elements, the instances quoted to substantiate the point were "emergence of the Al-Fateh and the People's League."<sup>59</sup> Al-Fateh had been neutralized half a decade before Farooq's father Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had returned to power in 1975, and the People's League had been set up a year before that in 1974.

Partial reporting of developments by the 'National Press' during 1987 caused widespread anger among people in the Valley. The reporting saddened even the President of India who said, "[It] misrepresented situation and exaggerated the intensity of incidents."<sup>60</sup> In one particular case, lawyers, writers and research scholars under the banner of the State Amity Council took exception to a news report with serious portents published in the *Statesman* on 22 August 1987. The Srinagar correspondent of the newspaper, notorious for misreporting, had reported that Muslim demonstrators in Srinagar "raided houses and shops belonging to the members of the minority community." This happened at a time when reporting on Kashmir had raised tension outside the Valley and could have incited communal backlash. The State Amity Council felt "alarmed by the adverse effect the story could have in different parts of the country" and "noted with regret that the correspondent had several times in the past also tried to spark off communal feelings by ruthlessly assassinating facts and filing inflammatory stories."<sup>61</sup> Describing the news report as "highly preposterous and misleading," the Council condemned journalists "who were consciously trying to disturb the age old and traditional communal harmony in Jammu & Kashmir" and demanded invocation of the Public Safety Act against them. In case of the reporter in question, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir was asked to "immediately withdraw all facilities extended to him by way of residential accommodation, etc."<sup>62</sup>

With the eruption of armed insurgency in 1989 and migration of the Kashmiri Pandits, Indian media, especially the electronic media, turned Kashmir into a highly emotive issue. A predominant section of the media, without a second look at facts, circulated stories and perceptions, creating an awful image of a Kashmiri Muslim. Statistics quoted by vested interests about the number of Kashmiri Pandit migrants and casualties suffered by them in the Valley were played over and over again to accord them legitimacy. For instance, media liberally disseminated false and misleading stories that Hindu temples in hundreds were razed in Kashmir, and that Kashmiri Muslims were actually hand in glove with militants in driving the Pandits away. No attention was paid to facts on ground or official reports and statistics.

By voluntarily depending on government sources and ignoring the 'other side', media in India has allowed public a controlled view

of the ground situation in Kashmir. It selectively highlights developments that suit the official narrative.<sup>63</sup> Strikes frequently observed by Kashmiris to express dissent or resentment against human rights violations are generally ignored or reported to give an entirely different perspective. Danish Nabi Gadda's "Partial Journalism—A Study of National Media of India and Kashmir Conflict" highlights the difference between Kashmiri sentiment and the media reality. He draws from Indian media coverage of Kashmir over a period of time to conclude that it "crushes professionalism and objectivity to serve what it usually describes as the country's 'national interest'."<sup>64</sup> Objective reporting done by few journalists like Harinder Baweja lies about destruction of temples in Kashmir or Pankaj Mishra on Chattisinghpura massacre was too little to change the trend; even journalist Parvez Bukhari believes that "nobody has reported these incidents as objectively, extensively and in proper perspective."<sup>65</sup>

The lowest point in credibility touched on Kashmir was the Press Council of India sponsored B. G. Verghese's Report on Kunan Poshpora mass rape and the Indian media turning it into the strength of the state narrative. The microphone wielding journalists, in particular, have removed the difference between a civilian protesting against state terrorism and a gun-wielding militant fighting for freedom. Today, hardly anyone questions the 'nationalist' media's penchant for looking for a militant in every unarmed civilian killed by army or paramilitary forces in Kashmir. If there were some print journalists who tried to balance their reporting, things took a turn for the worse when the electronic media joined the bandwagon of misinformation. Ever since, the tirade against Kashmir, supported by reports far removed from reality, has seen no end.

At the peak of 2016 civilian protests following Burhan Wani's killing,<sup>66</sup> a Srinagar-based TV journalist working for a leading Indian Hindi news channel resigned, alleging that it was forcing him to do "false and fabricated" stories on Kashmir and "twisting, ignoring and even killing" those based on ground reality in the Valley.<sup>67</sup> He accused the channel of not using his stories on the killing of an ATM kiosk guard Riyaz Ahmad Shah and Assistant Professor Shabir Ahmad Mungoo by security forces and, on the other hand, "I was asked to do stories which would show the people of Kashmir particularly those out on the streets to protest in bad light."<sup>68</sup> He said that he was asked

to do a defamatory story on Burhan Wani and when he refused, the channel asked its Jammu reporter who did it from there.

It was only after 1990 when the English Press made its foray into Srinagar and later online editions of newspapers began to be published that a different version of news began to come out of Kashmir. The *Greater Kashmir* was the first to come up followed by others, such as the *Rising Kashmir*, the *Kashmir Monitor*, the *Kashmir Reader* and the *Kashmir Life*, to name a few, made a great impact. After the Pandit migration, the Kashmir beat of national and international media fell vacant. The void was filled by Muslim boys and girls, fresh out of Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir. They wrote about the other side of Kashmir that scarcely got reported earlier. According to Mohammad Sayeed Malik, realism was the most striking feature of this reportage, and these “young home-grown professionals were able to establish their skill and also make a mark.”<sup>69</sup> Majid Maqbool, one such promising scribe, feels that the young Kashmiri journalist have “realised [that] there is a lot to write about Kashmir, and there are many untold stories that need to be told and which will not be written about by others.”<sup>70</sup> Objective reporting from a conflict zone like Kashmir has its own challenges. Several journalists have paid for it, some with life. Yusuf Jameel escaped couple of bomb attacks, including one in which he was seriously injured and his colleague, Mushtaq Ali, was killed.

Another unique situation faced by local journalists working for various Indian media outlets is that in many cases, their editors do not trust their copies, howsoever factually correct, if it challenges the security narrative or the stated position of the establishment. In situations like mass protests and killings or periodic elections in Kashmir, when the ground situation and the state narrative are at variance, the newspapers and TV channels send journalists from New Delhi to do reporting, reducing their own Srinagar staff to a support system. During the devastating September 2014 floods, the electronic media’s reporting was pathetic, to say the least. Its whole emphasis was to project army as the saviour of ‘ungrateful Kashmiris’ and playing the footage of its rescue sorties which, the many eyewitnesses alleged, were concentrated on airlifting non-locals, mostly tourists. On such occasions, a local reporter might even be asked to take rest. During the Amarnath land

transfer row in 2008 and resultant large-scale deaths owing to police and paramilitary firing, Rashid Ahmad, then Srinagar correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, was asked by his coordinating editor to take rest "after working so hard without a break." Given the "dangerous proportions the situation was taking I continued reporting only to find my copies being ignored at the desk. The newspaper stopped mention of Kashmir situation after the call," Ahmad recalls in one of his recent Facebook posts.<sup>71</sup>

Altaf Hussain, former correspondent of the *Times of India* recalls his copy being dropped in favour of PTI story in 1991, when at least 23 civilians were killed by CRPF at Chota Bazar in Srinagar. He reported the incident based on facts and eyewitness' account that "the CRPF had resorted to unprovoked firing." However, the newspaper carried the PTI story that reported the incident as 'cross-fire' and death toll as 32. In another incident, 18 persons, including 3 policemen, were killed in army firing in Kupwara district in 1994. The *Times of India* carried its correspondent's copy, corroborated next day by the Divisional Commissioner and the Inspector General of Police. The army also announced probe into the incident. However, the *Indian Express'* four-column front-page PTI-circulated story screamed, "Militants fire into market place killing 21."<sup>72</sup>

Sometimes, journalists reporting from Kashmir for international media also face issues for filing copies that the establishment back home is not comfortable with. Yusuf Jameel was asked by two Gulf newspapers to discontinue writing for them after succumbing to "pressure from Delhi." "The then *Khaleej Times* editor, an Indian and my former colleague at Reuters, in writing asked me to stop filing stories from a particular date. I responded with a single line resignation letter," Jameel recalls.<sup>73</sup> However, he had a different experience with the *Telegraph* Calcutta, where on two occasions, introduction of his copies and a quote of a politician were changed. He put his foot down and the editor, now himself a politician and a minister, agreed with Jameel and reprimanded the subeditor. Six years after Pankaj Mishra wrote in the *Guardian* that the Indian media reporting on civilian uprising in Kashmir during 2010 "was acting in concert with the government,"<sup>74</sup> the 'concertinist', fourth pillar of the state, had almost evolved into its fourth arm when Kashmir erupted again in 2016.

In tandem with a partial 'nationalist' media, trolling against Kashmiris on social media has alarmingly gone up. Hatemongers have launched an online war against them "with trolling and abusing becoming a common affair."<sup>75</sup> Sadly, many of these trolls are Kashmiri Pandits living in different parts of India. Even tragedies like the devastating flood of 2014 and violent deaths and crippling injuries suffered by people in Kashmir in 2008, 2010 and 2016 serve for them as occasions of 'celebration'. 'Intellectuals' with large following on social media also happily jump on the bandwagon.<sup>76</sup> During the July–August 2016 civilian protests and prolonged lockdown, following the killing of Burhan Wani, hatemongering against Kashmiri Muslims touched new heights. Many Facebook and Twitter users were observed taking potshots on people in distress and, in some cases, rejoicing casualties. Anyone "expressing sympathy or empathy with the Muslims is seen as a betrayer of the [Kashmiri Pandit] community."<sup>77</sup>

Rumours with potential of serious backlash like attack on Amarnath pilgrims and minority Kashmiri Pandit families by Muslim protesters were circulated and widely shared on social media. The senior BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister of the State, Nirmal Singh, denying occurrence of any such incident<sup>78</sup> proved of little consequence. Kashmiri Pandit employees recruited in the Valley under a Government of India relief package attempted to exploit the situation for their own benefit. They returned to Jammu where media reported them alleging that their transit camps in Kashmir were pelted with stones, demanding their transfer along with posts out of the Valley. Police vehemently denied any incident of stone pelting on any Pandit transit camp in the Valley. A senior police officer said that the Pandit employees "are lying."<sup>79</sup> In another case of mischief, a Kashmiri Pandit Facebook user uploaded a doctored video on his Timeline, showing the Martand Temple at Mattan in South Kashmir being attacked by stone pelting youth.<sup>80</sup> A section of media, without verification, published the news of the alleged attack. When some Facebook users, including few Kashmiri Pandits, called his bluff, he removed the video but not before it was shared by hundreds of people and had evoked thousands of anti-Kashmiri Muslims comments.<sup>81</sup> The head priest of the temple, Ashok Sodhi, vehemently denied any attack on the shrine and told the Current News Service (CNS):



It is a doctored video. I must tell you Muslims in the area themselves protect this temple. Without verifying the authenticity of the video, some Hindi newspapers from outside published this 'fake' news while some Pandits who claim to be the messiah of the community misinformed the country through social media.<sup>82</sup>

Commenting on the trolling by Kashmiri Pandits, Nitasha Koul observes that they "have been radicalised by Hindutva forces over the last two decades since they were forced to flee Kashmir in fear."<sup>83</sup> Majid Maqbool finds it painful:

At least, when you see so many kids savagely blinded by government forces, you can keep quiet and not feel the pain, which is still understandable, but when they go on and say 'you deserved it', 'why are kids on streets?' etc., it reflects about a dehumanized people.<sup>84</sup>

Online hatemongering and vilification of a community has caused disbelief and anguish in Kashmir, but it has failed to damage its cultural fabric. The Valley continues to produce shining examples of cordiality and communal harmony. Such instances were aplenty during the post-Burhan Wani civil upsurge. Under strict curfew across Kashmir, Muslim neighbours of a Hindu family in downtown Maharajgunj came out to perform last rites of an aged lady.<sup>85</sup> In another incident, Muslim villagers, again defying curfew, rescued and tended to Amarnath pilgrims injured in a road accident.<sup>86</sup> Zubeda Begum and her husband walked several miles in the curfew-imposed streets of Srinagar to deliver a bagful of food items at the Jawaharnagar residence of Diwanchand Pandit who had run out of stock in view of several days of continuous curfew.<sup>87</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Fauq was an author, historian, journalist and poet of Kashmiri origin whose ancestors had migrated to Punjab. He was close to Allama Iqbal and, over a period of time, published and edited many newspapers from Lahore, the first in 1901. Through these newspapers, he championed the cause of Kashmiris. Some quote 1905 as the year when he made application for starting a newspaper from Kashmir.
2. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 55.

3. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 140.
4. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 55.
5. Ibid., 60.
6. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 39.
7. Bacha Saka, whose real name was Habibullah Kalakani, was a highway robber who became the king of Afghanistan in January 1929 after deposing Amanullah Khan. He was overthrown in October 1929 by Mohammad Nadir Khan. Being son of a water-carrier, he was known as *bacha saka* (son of a water-carrier).
8. The Government records claim that Abdullah was appointed on a salary of ₹60 per month. (File No. C.S./P. B.151/S, Year 1931, State Archives Repository, Jammu.)
9. *Daily Milap*, Lahore, 25 August 1931; *Daily Pratap*, Lahore, 26 August 1931.
10. *Daily Milap*, Lahore, 26 August 1931.
11. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 12 August 1931.
12. Ibid.
13. *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.
14. Ibid.
15. *Weekly Guru Ghantaal*, 30 August 1931.
16. *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
17. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 15 August 1931.
18. *Milap*, 26 August 1931.
19. Ghulam Nabi Khayal in an e-mail on 11 August 2016.
20. Saalik, Abdul Majid, *Sarguzasht* (autobiography), 237.
21. Khurshid Alam Khan, "Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat Ke Sang-i-Meel," *Aftab Aur Srinagar Times*, 28–29.
22. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 141.
23. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 135.
24. Ibid., 137.
25. Two years after Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was dethroned as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on 9 August 1953, his supporters floated a political organization called the Plebiscite Front. The Front headed by Abdullah's lieutenant, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, spearheaded a peaceful mass movement for holding plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir as promised under the United Nations Resolutions to decide the future of the State. The Front was wound up after 20 years when Abdullah returned to power in 1975 under an agreement with the Government of India.
26. During the intervening night of 26–27 December 1963, the holy relic housed at the revered Muslim shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar mysteriously disappeared, plunging Kashmir into unprecedented turmoil. A massive agitation was launched by people for its restoration which ended only with its equally mysterious recovery by the government about a month later. For a long time, the Kashmiris demanded identification and bringing to the fore the real culprit of the theft, but the government did not lift the veil of secrecy from the incident.

27. Gadda, Danish Nabi, "Partial Journalism"—A study of national media of India and Kashmir Conflict," 13–23.
28. Mohammad Sayeed Malik in an interview with author on 11 August 2016.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. In an e-mail on 11 August 2016.
34. Ibid.
35. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Mohammad Sayeed Malik in an interview with author on 11 August 2016.
39. Ibid.
40. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 20.
41. Abdullah told this in an interview with Yusuf Jameel months before his death on 8 September 1982. (As told by Jameel to the author on 4 August 2016.)
42. Arun Shourie, "The Srinagar fire: Whodunit?" *India Today*. [www.indiatoday.intoday.in/story/investigation-turns-up-startling-evidence-in-congressi-head-quarters-fire-in-srinagar/1/371968.html](http://www.indiatoday.intoday.in/story/investigation-turns-up-startling-evidence-in-congressi-head-quarters-fire-in-srinagar/1/371968.html)
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
46. Ahmad, *My Years with Sheikh Abdullah: Kashmir 1971–1987*, 46.
47. *Hindustan Times*, 4 February 1986.
48. Ibid., 27 February 1987.
49. In an interview with the author on 29 August 2016.
50. In an interview with the author on 24 August 2016.
51. *Weekly Ishaet*, 18–24 April 1986.
52. Ibid., 28 February 1986.
53. Jawad Hussain Reshi, "Jammu wa Kashmir Kay Mojooodah Haalaat," *Srinagar Times*, 30 April 1986.
54. *Hindustan Times*, 11 May 1987, 26 May 1987.
55. Arun Joshi, "Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir," *Hindustan Times*, 7 July 1987.
56. Ibid.
57. *Hindustan Times*, 7 July 1987, 20 July 1987.
58. Joshi, "Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir," 7 July 1987.
59. Ibid.
60. *Weekly Ishaet*, 17–22 July 1986.
61. Press Release issued in Srinagar by the State Amity Council on Thursday, 27 August 1987.
62. Ibid.

63. Gadda, "Partial Journalism'—A study of national media of India and Kashmir Conflict," 13–23.
64. Ibid.
65. In a telephonic interview with the author on 15 August 2016.
66. Burhan was a 22-year old commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen militant group whose killing on 8 July 2016 resulted in unprecedented civilian protests across Kashmir. The police and paramilitary forces used disproportionate force to quell stone-pelting protesters causing large scale casualties. By August 2016, 83 people, mostly youth, were killed and over 11,000 were injured. About 600 suffered pellet injuries in vital parts of the body and many were rendered blind.
67. *The Asian Age*, 1 September 2016.
68. Ibid.
69. In an interview with the author on 11 August 2016.
70. In an interview with the author on 27 July 2016.
71. Rashid Ahmad's post on his Facebook timeline on 1 August 2016.
72. Altaf Hussain in a telephonic interview on 23 August 2016.
73. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
74. *The Guardian*. [www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/aug/14/silence-over-kashmir-conflict](http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/aug/14/silence-over-kashmir-conflict)
75. *Greater Kashmir*, 26 August 2016.
76. Ibid.
77. Pradeep Magazine, *Hindustan Times*, 15 July 2016.
78. *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, 17 July 2016.
79. *Kashmir Reader*, 29 July 2016.
80. *Greater Kashmir*, 26 August 2016.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., 25 August 2016.
83. Koul, "Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn in the Games of Hindutva Forces," *The Wire*, 7 January 2016.
84. In an email to the author on 25 August 2016.
85. *Greater Kashmir*, online edition, 17 July 2016. (The Jammu and Kashmir Government banned mobile telephone and internet services and temporarily blocked cable TV, besides stopping newspapers from publishing for several days after protests spiralled across Kashmir, following the killing of Burhan Wani. As a result, no newspaper was published in Srinagar for few days.)
86. *Hindustan Times*, 13 July 2016.
87. *Mail Online India*, 11 July 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3685265/This-humanity-lies-Muslim-couple-defy-Srinagar-s-curfew-walk-miles-violent-streets-bring-food-starving-Pandit-friends.html>

# Epilogue

A Kashmiri Pandit's story of Kashmir is unfinished without an emphatic reference to himself as an aborigine of the Valley. The term finds returning mention in the community's narrative on 'persecution and exodus'. It is invoked to bring home the point that the Pandits, 'the only original inhabitants of Kashmir', were subjected to forced conversion and driven out of their homeland by Muslims—by implication the outsiders—who usurped their properties. If one goes by the storyline, the aboriginal status of a Kashmiri Pandit "can be traced through the annals of history in the Valley."<sup>1</sup> The community's claim of being aborigines is rooted in the mythological account of Kashmir forwarded by the *Nilamata Purana*. Kashmiri Pandits assert that they are the descendants of Kashyapa who had the lake Satisar drained and caused human settlements on the thus emerged land. Being the progeny of Kashyapa, they argue, means being "the original residents of Kashyapmar, the modern Kashmir."<sup>2</sup> According to the *Nilamata Purana* the *Nagas* were the children of Kashyapa. Kashmiri Pandits emphasize that they are the descendants of Kashyapa or, in other words, of the *Nagas*.

The claimants of the only aborigine status in Kashmir practise Shaivism which, in its earliest form, is a post mid-9th century AD development. It took some more time to actually turn into a practicing religion. Its first theologian, Somananda was born in 875 AD and died in 925 AD. While it is difficult, not impossible, to conclusively identify the religion of the earliest man in Kashmir, there is no confusion about the fact that Shaivism in Kashmir is a later day introduction, preceded, as it was, by Buddhism and Islam. As is corroborated by history, Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir as early as the 3rd century BC and, from Kalhana's account, we observe prominent Muslim

footprints in Kashmir from the 8th century AD. It is interesting to note that in the oldest extant narrative of Kashmir, the *Rajatarangini*, we do not come across words like Pandits and Brahmans. Abraham Eraly elaborates this premise further when he observes that “Brahmin as a varna hardly had any presence in historical records before the Gupta Empire era [3rd century to 6th century CE],” and “no Brahmin, no sacrifice, no ritualistic act of any kind ever, even once, is referred to in any Indian text” dated to be from the first century CE or before.<sup>3</sup> Their role as priests and repository of sacred knowledge, as well as their importance in the practice of Vedic Shrauta rituals, grew during the Gupta Empire era and thereafter.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving aside, for a moment, what the annals of history have to offer on the subject, the aboriginal theorists, on the one hand, claim that mass conversion of Hindus of Kashmir was brought about by force and, on the other, describe the minority Hindus, who did not convert, as the ‘only natives of Kashmir’. By this logic, the Muslim kings—the so-called villains in the story—have actually converted (the non-existent) non-Kashmiri Hindus to Islam. The other scenario is that the converted masses automatically lost the aboriginal status for deserting their faith! The neo-converts and their generations after assuming Muslim names retained their surnames which they continue to share with their ex-coreligionists and compatriots. That raises an important question: Is a Kashmiri Wanchoo or a Bazaz or a Raina an aborigine if he is a Hindu and not if a Muslim? One would come across among Muslims of Kashmir any number of surnames that are equally common among the Pandits. Among these are Bhat, Raina, Nath, Langoo, Malla, Bazaz, Saraf, Munshi, Watal, Wali, Khar, Shangloo, Nehru, Gagar, Kharoo, Aga, Jalali, Peer, Pandit, Parimoo and Mattoo.<sup>5</sup> The ‘only original inhabitants’ premise seeks to dislodge from the aborigine status the millions of Kashmiri Muslims sharing these and many more surnames with the Pandits. The Kashmiri race, it may be pointed out, “comes from one stock, inherit one culture and speak one common language.”<sup>6</sup>

For going through the annals of history to find out if Kashmiri Pandits are the only original inhabitants of Kashmir, one would naturally refer to the *Rajatarangini*, ‘the oldest recorded account’ of the land and its people and the one that a Kashmiri Pandit would,

in reverence, hold as the Bible on Kashmir's ancient history. There, however, is one problem. The tome was composed in the 12th century, when neither mass conversion of Hindus had taken place nor were there Muslim kings with naked swords running after their Hindu subjects. Much as Kalhana through his 'mind's eye and divine intuition'<sup>7</sup> could see the events preceding him by 3,000 years, he did not utilize these faculties to foresee developments taking place two centuries after him. So, he is not in a position to enlighten us on whether Kashmiri Pandits, who stuck to their faith in the face of mass conversion, were the only original inhabitants of Kashmir or their converted blood too had a claim over this honour. What, however, the record keeper of the 'Hindu Kashmir' shares with us is a significant development taking place in Kashmir during the 6th century AD that the 'original inhabitants' would, most likely, want to be kept under the wraps.

Before coming to that development, it would be interesting to recall that the land of Kashmir itself does not produce any material evidence in support of the aborigine theory. The Hindu religious literature, such as *Nilamata Purana* and the *mahatmyas*, written after the 5th century AD and the archaeological evidence unearthed do not match in so far as the presence of the *Nagas*, the claimed ancestors of Kashmiri Pandits is concerned. As we have already observed (in Chapter 1), while archaeological evidence has testified to human presence in Kashmir as early as 780,000 years, no such confirmation is forthcoming with respect to the presence of the *Nagas*. The Burzahom, Gufkral and Simthan, the first revealed human settlements in Kashmir, do not go with the *Nagas* theory and, naturally, any premise built over it. The terracotta figurine, the Harwan tiles or the numismatics finds, none subscribes to the *Nagas* hypothesis. The earliest religious images discovered so far relate either to Buddhism (2nd–3rd centuries AD) or post-5th century Hinduism. While the Burzahom Neolithic settlement does not give any clue about the faith of its people, it clearly shows that they buried their dead, which is not in line with the Vedic instructions that Kashmiri Pandits subscribe to. That leaves the *Nilamata Purana* as the only 'evidence' to claim the existence of the *Nagas* in Kashmir. Unfortunately, however, it is undecided about their form. In the absence of any corroborative evidence coming from the literature anterior to the *Nilamata* or any historian of the past seconding

this possibility, the *Nagas* in Kashmir are mythological rather than historical characters. Any claim to be their progeny is only theoretical.

Coming back to the development during the 6th century AD, the momentous occurrence changed the religious landscape of Kashmir. As we already know, in 530 AD, a monster of a man in the person of Mihirakula, thrown out of North India for his vicious conduct, entered Kashmir and occupied its throne after killing the king who had extended hospitality to him and given him refuge. Mihirakula, a White Hun, had arrived with his horde whose religious practices were different from that of the local people. Buddhism was then deep rooted in Kashmir. The popularity of the religion is borne out by the fact that Kushan ruler, Kanishka, held the 4th World Buddhist Conference here, marking the birth of a new and progressive Buddhism known as the Mahayana.

Arrival of Buddhist scholars like Hieun Tsiang in Kashmir too points to this fact. Kashmiri Buddhist scholars and monks spread the message of the Buddha to Central Asia, China and Korea on the one side and, on the other, to Sri Lanka, Java and Sumatra.<sup>8</sup>

The religion travelled to Ladakh, a Buddhist populated area even today.

What we learn from the *Rajatarangini*, and Aurel Stein's notes is that Mihirakula's religious propensity was markedly leaned towards Shaivism.<sup>9</sup> Recalling at the risk of repetition, his preference for Shaivism was evidenced "by his coins which, in the emblems of bull and trident and in the legends *jayatu trsa*, *jayatu vrsadhvaja*, display a distinct fancy towards *S'aivism*."<sup>10</sup> He founded at S'rinagri (Srinagar) Mihiresvara, the shrine of Shiva, and in Holada (Vular Pargana) the large town called Mihirapura.<sup>11</sup> He oppressed the Buddhist population and demolished their religious places and symbols. In Hiuen Tsiang's account, he is a persecutor of Buddhist institutions.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, he emerges as a liberal patron of Shaivism who extended courtesies to and distributed *agrarahas* among the Brahmins. In a significant development of far-reaching consequences, he brought Brahmins from Gandhara and settled them in Kashmir, chiefly at Vijeshwara (Bijbehara) and bestowed on them a thousand *agrarahas*. Kalhana describes these Brahmins "as resembling himself [Mihirakula] in their habits and verily themselves the lowest of the twice-born."<sup>13</sup> An *agraraha* to each Brahman would



mean that at least 1,000 of them were settled in Bijbehara alone. If more than one Brahman were accommodated in one *agrahara* then their number would be as large. Mihirakula's generous patronage gave these Brahmans immense influence and a conducive atmosphere to flourish in. The open war that the ruler waged against Buddhism further increased their clout and within a short period they started wielding power over the lives of the people.

Mihirakula's munificence proved conducive for the propagation of Shaivism in Kashmir and, not long after he was gone, it had gained foothold in the land, so much so that religious texts like the *Nilamata Purana* (6th–8th century AD) and the *mahatmyas* were written after literally wiping out Buddhism from Kashmir. The literature was aimed at sanctifying religious places, majority of which were built on the Buddhist sites, and rituals and ceremonials of Shaivism. It gave birth to a new narrative on Kashmir's physical and cultural history that is now fervently guarded by the followers of Shaivism in Kashmir. However, it was only during the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century AD that Shaivism had its profound appearance in Kashmir<sup>14</sup> and became "the dominant cult of Kashmir from the tenth century."<sup>15</sup> The first teacher of Shaivism, Tryambakaditya, settled in Kashmir Valley around 800 AD.<sup>16</sup> Through Kalhana's and Khemendra's account and other sources (in Chapter 4), we get a broad view of how cleverly and craftily the *Shaivite* Brahmans exploited the common people and manoeuvred their intrusion in the corridors of power and stayed there irrespective of change in political dispensations.

Mihirakula was not the only ruler who brought to Kashmir the Brahmans from outside. There were others also who did the same. Prior to him, Jaluka brought and "settled from that region [Aryavarta] people of all four castes in his own land and particularly righteous men acquainted with legal procedure."<sup>17</sup> Gopaditya, sixth in line after Mihirakula, expelled from the country those Brahmans who had taken to irreligious and immoral practices and in their stead brought and settled other Brahmans from "pure countries."<sup>18</sup> Besides, Didda, the 10th century AD ruler, and Jayasimha (1128–49 AD) also "encouraged lots of Brahmans from outside to settle in Kashmir."<sup>19</sup> It calls for a serious study to find out who were the descendants of these Brahmans and *Shaivite* teachers who were brought from Gandhara by Mihirakula

or settled by Gopaditya, Didda and Jayasimha in Kashmir or who, like Tryambakaditya, came as late as up to the 8th century to take permanent residence in Kashmir. This might as well help approach the 'original inhabitants' issue in an academic way.

The claim of being the only aborigine community is as imperfect as the other one about the Pandits being the sole inheritors of a 5,000-year old history of Kashmir. Like in the case of the former, its claimants ignore the fact that inheritance to this unique treasure would flow to both the communities through a common fountain—the land that they had been living in together from times immemorial, irrespective of their present faith. However, the majority community is all but overzealous to invoke the 5,000-year old history, the first 3,000 years of which are the work of a versifier's 'mind's eye' and 'divine intuition.' Historians and scholars are unanimous that the 'recorded history' of Kashmir touches the realm of authenticity only post-7th–8th century AD. Before that, it is only a make-believe account of the supposed rulers and events associated with them.

Like the terms holocaust, genocide and mass rape, the aborigine angle given to the sad story of migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 is a political spin. It has an emotional appeal among the Hindu majority of India, especially its fast-expanding extreme right wing, which the community leadership looks towards for support. The claim provides a foundation to the victimhood narrative while simultaneously demonizing and, theoretically at least, dislodging the 'usurper' community from its rightful ownership of the land. The whole premise is based on 'We' and 'They'—'We', the Kashmiri Pandits, who as the erstwhile majority were persecuted and converted into a minority, and 'They', the Kashmiri Muslims, who converted a Hindu land into an Islamic territory, which is of utmost importance for the Hindus to reclaim.

For a very long time now—in fact, several centuries—Kashmiri Muslims have been weighed down by the blame of forcibly converting their Hindu brethren, a sin which they never committed. Logically, if over 90 per cent people in a country decide to convert to another religion, the remainder members of the community, who did not go with them, cannot accuse the converts of reducing them to a minority. Historically, it is proven that long before the establishment of the Muslim rule, Muslim footprints were already visible on Kashmir's soil.

The voluntary mass conversion came about later through preaching by spiritual guides over three centuries. Had the sword of a king converted people, at least some of the converts, if not all, would have returned to their original faith soon after the threat was gone. But no such thing happened even after the much maligned Sikandar died and his 'benevolent' successor and son reportedly issued a decree "allowing all those who had embraced Islam under pressure to return to their faith if they so wished."<sup>20</sup> Ever since that mass conversion, Kashmir did not see any case of, what the Hindutva groups now call, *ghar waapsi*. Had any such development taken place, the Brahman chroniclers would have pointed out that to buttress their claim of forced conversions earlier. The long oppression suffered by the Muslims of Kashmir under the Sikh and the Hindu rule was enough for these forced converts or their children to revert to the religion of their ancestors and save themselves from state persecution. If conversion came about by the state force, who converted at sword point the ruler of the time, Rinchana, or his prime minister and other nobles? Did they also convert under duress? For the sake of argument, if the forced conversion of Kashmiri Hindus is a fact of history, the victims were the converts who were 'forced' to change faith, not the Pandits who retained theirs. The Muslim converts had to undergo a double persecution. First, as Hindus at the hands of the 'bigoted Muslim rulers' and, second, as Muslims at the hands of equally 'bigoted Hindu rulers'.

Balraj Madhok came up with a fantastic story, according to which the Muslims of Kashmir made a collective approach to the 19th century Hindu ruler, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, for being taken back into the Hindu fold, pleading with him that "they had been forcibly converted to Islam against their will and were longing to re-embrace their ancestral faith."<sup>21</sup> Madhok, the right wing Hindu politician, expressed the regret of his life that the 'short-sighted Kashmiri Pandits' sabotaged a major event "which could have changed the whole course of history of Kashmir."<sup>22</sup> He writes:

Ranbir Singh sought the guidance of Swamy Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, in the matter. Swami Dayand advised him that he could take them back in Hinduism after performing certain rites. The proposed return of Kashmiri Muslims to their original faith was not to the liking of short sighted Kashmiri

Pundits who were having hey day since the return of Dogra Hindu rule. They tried to dissuade the Maharaja. When they found him adamant they took to a subterfuge. They filled some boats with stones and brought them midstream before Maharaja's palace on the Jhelum. They threatened him that they would commit suicide by drowning along with the sinking boats as a protest against his decision to take back Muslims into Hindu fold and that he would be then guilty of "*Brahm Hatya*" i.e. murder of Brahmins. Ranbir Singh was a brave soldier. But he could not muster courage to face the crafty Brahmins, who were out to misinterpret the Vedic "*dharma*" for their selfish ends. The plan of return of Kashmiri Muslims to Hinduism thus fell through.<sup>23</sup>

As in case of the larger narrative on Kashmir, which abounds in make-believe account, the story weaved by Madhok is only a flight of his imagination. Ranbir Singh ruled Kashmir from 1857 AD to 1885 AD, which in terms of history would mean 'yesterday' only. This is the time when any such incident would have attracted wide attention and transferred it into the pages of history. Around this time, Kashmir was frequented by European travellers and writers who extensively wrote about it and its people. None of them has mentioned the Muslims of Kashmir individually or collectively approaching their Hindu ruler for their readmission to Hinduism. Significantly, men like Walter Lawrence and M. A. Stein, who have voluminous works on Kashmir to their credit, were in the Valley around this time. We find no mention of this 'incident' in their writings either. Again, why would Muslims of Kashmir need a go-ahead from their Hindu ruler if they were so desperate to 'return to Hinduism'? They could simply renounce Islam and declare their homecoming. What is actually known to have happened is that Ranbir Singh toyed with the idea of 'reconverting' Muslims to reclaim Kashmir as a Hindu majority land, but Kashmiri Pandits, feeling the prospect of losing their privileges, "outright rejected the suggestion of Maharaja Ranbir Singh."<sup>24</sup>

The allegation of forced mass conversion is fragile also because of those who make it fail to conclusively identify the so-called culprit. Sometimes it is the Muslim kings, especially Sikandar and his neo-convert Prime Minister Suhabhata, who took the Muslim name of

Saif-ud-Din after conversion, who are blamed for turning a Hindu Kashmir into a 'Muslim State' and, at other times, Muslims as a community are blamed for the sin. If, for the sake of argument, the blood-thirsty Muslim kings, one after the other, killed and persecuted Hindus to forcibly convert them to Islam, how did a handful of them escape this all out slaughter and cruelty? Did they resist the forced conversion and succeed? Unfortunately, the pages of history do not reflect any resistance unless invented by some zealot Brahman writer in the 19th century. Again, if the 'forced conversion' resorted to by Muslim kings is a fact of history, why should converted masses or their progeny shoulder the blame? None of these kings, as we have observed earlier (in the Prologue), were of Kashmiri origin. They all came from outside the Kashmir mainland and occupied its throne. Significantly, for administering the affairs of the state, they depended on Pandits rather than Muslims. The Pandit Narrative presents the converts as persecuted and the persecutor in the same breath. On the one hand, it holds Muslim kings responsible for persecuting and forcing the Kashmiri Hindus to convert to Islam and, on the other, accuses the thus converted people of hunting for their erstwhile brethren.

The alleged persecution of Hindu subjects by Muslim rulers and the animosity of the Muslim majority towards the Hindu minority in Kashmir reside more in writings of some Brahman scribes than in history. These 'non-historians' engaged themselves in building a community narrative rather than narrating the past. Being the only literate community in Kashmir at a time when the Muslim majority was piecing their lives together under a malevolent dispensation, these writers painted the Muslim rule, as well as the majority community, in black. The literature produced and influenced by these worthies is a story of their victimhood. "The past recalled by the Pandits thus differed substantially from the past which had actually occurred."<sup>25</sup> A look at the 'community sources' unveils, what Henny Sender observes, "the same bees in their bonnets as one finds in the bonnet of Anand Koul and listens to the same buzzing as one listens to from [Koul's] *The Kashmiri Pandit*." This history remembered and recorded by Kashmiri Brahmans is a "mirage of reality, distorted by the defence of private interests and influenced by changed cultural values."<sup>26</sup> It exists because it serves the narrative. Sender observes:

Instances of royal persecution and Brahmanical flight during the pre-Sultanate period have not imposed themselves on the collective memory of the Kashmiri Pandit community. The pre-Muslim period of Kashmir's history is remembered, instead as a golden age, contrasting sharply with the subsequent centuries of Muslim rule.<sup>27</sup>

Sender goes further to describe the community history built by the Pandit writers as a mirage of reality and not a tale of relentless oppression. She writes:

The actual history of the Pandit community of Kashmir is neither a tale of paradise lost, nor of relentless oppression. Its beginnings are shrouded more in legendary claims than of reality. The early history of the Kashmiri Brahmins as they themselves have remembered and recorded it illustrates Jan Vasina's description of testimony as a mirage of reality, distorted by the defence of private interests and influenced by changing cultural values.<sup>28</sup>

Following the Pandit migration in 1990, the persecution narrative was reinvented and circulated through quicker and more potent medium than was available to the previous narrators. The reworking of history to claim victimhood and assert a separate and distinctive identity was used as a crucial tool. To establish that attacks on temples were a continuous process since the establishment of the Muslim sultanate, the gap between the termination of the Hindu Dogra rule and the onset of militancy is plugged by the discovery that "[the] encroachment of temple land by majority community with active help of fundamentalist elements started after 1947 when Maharaja Hari Singh abdicated his throne."<sup>29</sup> Amazingly, the idiom used by the previous narrator has travelled unchanged to the present. Hence, if Sikandar was breaking temples "day and night"<sup>30</sup> during the 14th century, "more than 200 temples in the Kashmir Valley were damaged after the eruption of armed insurgency."<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, after persecution, only 'eleven Brahman [Kashmiri Pandit] families'<sup>32</sup> survived in medieval Kashmir, in the post-1989 situation "*Panditun ke senkdun, hazarun gharun aur mandirun ko jaladiya geya ya zameen mai dha diya geya...* *Pandit[un] ke pooray pooray gaon ko saaf kiya geya*" [Hundreds and

thousands of houses and temples of the Pandits were torched or razed to the ground.... Entire Pandit villages were cleared [of their population].<sup>33</sup> In 1931, "the trouble is led by such people who want to see the establishment of an Islamic State in north India"<sup>34</sup> and post-1990, when Kashmir was either directly ruled by India or its handpicked men, the Pandits would not return to the "servitude of a Muslim State."<sup>35</sup> Sikandar, we were told, offered the Brahmans the choices of "death, conversion or exile"<sup>36</sup> and the Pandits in 1990 were asked to "*reliv tcheliv ya geliv* [convert, run away or die]."<sup>37</sup>

A dominant section of the Indian media is playing the main role in disseminating these stories and perceptions. A seven-minute duration film with a Kashmiri Pandit actor as protagonist screened by an English language TV channel as its prime time presentation on 19 January 2016 is the latest piece with the least regard for facts and potential to promote communal hatred. Historically, an influential section of the media, known as the Hindu Press before 1947 or the Indian Mainstream Press of today, has exhibited prejudice against the majority community of Kashmir. The questionable role of the media in the wake of the 13 July 1931 developments, the Pandit agitation of 1967 and the communal situation in 1986 aptly demonstrate the unfair role of the fourth pillar of democracy (in Chapters 5 and 6). Saner elements within the communities have often questioned reporting and commentaries on Kashmir by this section of the media, arguing that it promote communal tension. With readily available forums of mass media, some self-appointed leaders of the Pandit community, almost on daily basis, give vent to their bitterness against Kashmiri Muslims.

The unpleasantness in relations existing between the two communities has its origin in the socio-economic and educational development of Muslims, especially after 1947, that unseated the Pandits from overlordship of the masses literally subservient to them for centuries. The opposition to Muslims getting even meagre share in government jobs could be seen in this background. Since logic and facts were not with the supposed victim community to counter this, a bogey of persecution and discrimination was raised, as repetitively observed in 1931, 1967 and 1986. On each of these occasions, the allegations of religious persecution were made only to camouflage the claim to more employment opportunities and the perceived threat to the Pandit monopoly

on government services. Each time, the much hue and cry raised over 'discrimination and religious persecution' manifested itself ultimately in the demand for more employment avenues. Notwithstanding this, the community is observed enjoying the spoils of power throughout history, whether under Muslim or non-Muslim rule.

In any discourse on the current relationship between Kashmir's two main communities, the advocates of the Muslim-Pandit amity often invoke, what they call, their historical mutual bond to flag the need for undoing the prevailing bitterness. The past bonhomie is illustrated through 'centuries' co-existence' under the shade of *Kashmiriyat*, a term that mysteriously surfaced and got currency after the Pandit migration. Analysts and writers are not off the mark when they allude to this 'historical cordiality.' However, what is not emphasized in such discourses is that the cordiality between the two communities, representing 95 per cent population on the one side and 4 per cent on the other, has more to do more with the moral fibre of the former than with the "spirit of accommodation and amity of a peace-loving and non-violent" minuscule minority.<sup>38</sup> The majority community nurtured and sustained this cordiality, irrespective of returns. A calm and minority-friendly Kashmir amidst communal frenzy on its borders in 1947, perhaps, explains the point best.

The displacement of nearly an entire community is an unfortunate spin-off of the developments unfolding in Kashmir in 1989. Ever since, the return of migrant Pandits has remained a focal point in any talk on the Kashmir situation. At one point in time, it looked just round the corner but, over a period of time, has now become a complex issue. There are many reasons, one of which is that a large number of migrants have sold their properties and settled outside Kashmir. Second, the post-migration generation, born and brought up outside its borders, feel no emotional attachment with the Valley. They are successfully pursuing their careers in different cities of India and abroad and would at best like to visit the land of their forefathers as tourists once in a while. Still, there is a large majority of migrant elders who would like to return at any cost. For them, even a quarter of a century's separation from their motherland has not been able to kill the desire to go to eternal sleep in its lap. They are the worst sufferers of this tragedy. Unfortunately for them, some self-professed leaders, few among whom had moved out of Kashmir in search of greener pastures years and decades before



the mass migration in 1990, are making their return difficult, if not impossible. These activists write, debate and speak on their behalf in a language and manner that further complicates the issues. They leave nobody in doubt about their objective being perpetual estrangement between the two communities of Kashmir. The vilification campaign launched by these self-serving people has left even the diehard optimists disillusioned about the early return of Pandit migrants. Television studios and social networking sites, on which these debates are conducted, are causing more damage to the cause of mutual amity than serving it. Instead of minimizing the prevailing trust deficit between the two communities and building an atmosphere where the migrants could return to the warmth of their erstwhile neighbours, the atmosphere is poisoned by raising controversial and contentious issues and quoting fake statistics. The demand for a separate Hindu homeland and exclusive Hindu settlements in Kashmir and holding every single member of the majority community responsible for the plight of migrant Pandits all but assist in creating a helpful environment for early homecoming of the displaced community.

The migration of population from Kashmir under the fear of gun is not a one-community-alone development. If Pandits moved out in tens of thousands, hundreds of Muslim families associated with pro-India political parties also migrated under similar circumstances. Only they do not figure in the migration narrative. Their trials and tribulations did not find any mention in the reports of human rights groups, official dossiers or TV panel discussions. Journalist Rashid Ahmad observes:

The grim reality, however, is that while Pandits found support from all corners, including government and civilians, everywhere outside the Valley, the Muslim families were left in lurch in streets. Rehabilitation camps were set up and free ration and other facilities were given to Pandit migrants (which they genuinely deserved) besides making special arrangements for the education of their children. Different state governments reserved seats in medical and [other] professional colleges for Pandit students. Muslim migrants, on the other hand, were ignored equally by the government and the commoners. They had to piece together their lives by themselves... Pandits are not the sole custodian of Indian-ness in Jammu and Kashmir. If India is still in Kashmir, it

is just because of Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Saifuddin Soz and their companies. They are holding Indian flag here. While Pandits chose to run away to save their lives, the NC, PDP and Congress cadres took bullets on their chests but did not change. Their funerals were boycotted, and their families had to face social isolation.<sup>39</sup>

Nobody would dispute the fact that in a situation as sensitive as Kashmir, selective mention of tragedies will all but bridge the trust gap. Understanding and recognizing each other's pain and suffering is crucial for achieving this. Alongside a reference to Nadimarg, Wandhama and Sangrampora, a mention of Gawkadal, Sopore, Handwara and Islamia College is imperative to complete the picture of Kashmir's tragedy. Talking about Girija Tikoo, victim of a heinous crime, without a mention of Kunan Poshpora makes an incomplete landscape of horror in Kashmir. What befell on the uprooted Pandits in torn out tarpaulin tents in Jammu can be better understood by an equal measure of appreciation, if not more, of the torment associated with crackdowns, indiscriminate firing, summary killings, custodial disappearances and rapes in Kashmir. Opposition to the withdrawal of AFSPA, denigrating the martyrs of 1931, demanding separate Hindu homeland or settlements and harping on unsubstantiated cases of massive destruction of temples would impede rather than bring about reconciliation. For constructing bridges, it is important to view in the same context the uprooting of over 100,000 of Hindus in 1990 and as many or more Muslims forced to flee to Punjab before 1947 or about 500,000 hounded out of Jammu that year. Honouring the memory of over 200 Pandits killed since 1989 finds meaning with honouring the memory of tens of thousands of Muslims felled during the same period in Kashmir or 237,000 of them massacred in different parts of Jammu province on the eve of the Partition. Holding Sikandar culpable for the destruction of temples is an incomplete narration of Kashmir's history without recounting the locking of mosques and turning those into stables and granary stores by Sikh and Hindu rulers. The violence against and annihilation of Buddhism and its religious places in the ancient Kashmir is also important to be brought into the context in any deliberation on religious intolerance existing 'since centuries.'

Nobody holds the Pandit community responsible for all the tragedies befalling the Muslims in Kashmir. In the same manner, Kashmiri

Muslims as a community did not manufacture the torment of their Hindu brethren. The slogan shouting from mosque loudspeakers during 1990 finds a new context when viewed as spontaneous response to State repression instead of a conspiracy to chase the Pandits away. It continued even after the Pandits had left Kashmir. In fact, during the massive public demonstrations in 2008, 2010 and 2016, mosques across the Valley reverberated with *azadi* and Islamic slogans for weeks and months to generate widespread protests. There were literally no Pandits to be chased away by these slogans. In fact, the Muslim protesters were not the only ones to use mosque loudspeakers. During 1990s, even army and paramilitary troops frequently used these to announce crackdown of an area and directing people to come out for identification parade and house searches. Whatever be the level of mistrust, there is no denying the fact that Kashmiri Muslims want the Pandits back amongst them, not as protected souls in barbed-wired settlements but as next door neighbours sharing each other's joy and sorrow. Nobody expects them to side with the Muslim separatist movement in Kashmir as historically they have never associated themselves with the majority community's politics. The only experiment made in 1939 in the dissolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and establishment of a secular Jammu and Kashmir National Conference failed soon after as its Pandit members deserted the party one by one.

In the last 26 years, lot of water has flown through the Jhelum. The two communities not living as neighbours any longer have emotionally drifted from each other, leaving the vacant space to be filled by bitterness. Notwithstanding this, the Muslims of Kashmir want and look forward to the Pandits living with them as before. There are hopeful signs to build on the prospect of their return. No Kashmiri Muslim leader—whether from separatist, pro-India or militant camp—has spoken against the Pandits as a community or objected to their homecoming. Neither is anybody in Kashmir waiting with daggers and guns for the returning migrants. For the past many years, thousands of them annually visit the shrine of Ragini Devi at Kheer Bhawani where Muslims extend them warm hospitality. Many Pandits visit the Valley to attend marriage ceremonies or other functions or simply as tourists. None of them was harmed or waylaid by 'Islamist fundamentalists'.

Makhan Lal Bhat's homecoming is an inspirational story. A reluctant migrant, Bhat, returned to his home in Kashmir after

moving from Srinagar to Jammu, Delhi and Mumbai to find a foothold. Today, his family, the only from the minority community at Shankarpora in a South Srinagar suburb, is happily living among their erstwhile Muslims neighbours, some of whom share with him a common family-root. In June 1990, at the peak of militancy when all other Pandits in the neighbourhood had already left, Bhat felt scared when one evening some unidentified men tried to scale his boundary wall. The family migrated to Jammu, leaving behind their house and an established business in silk weaving. After reaching Jammu, they realized that they had nowhere to go. Most of the migrant Pandits had already arrived in the city and occupied whatever little spaces they could get. The family found itself landed in a wasteland where even a drop of water was hard to find, not to speak of a shelter. For the fear of being bitten by snakes on the ground, they spent umpteen nights on the roof tops of *kothas* of Muslim Gujjars. It was under such harsh conditions that a Kashmiri Muslim friend came searching for them and offered his house at Talab Tiloo to live in.

Back home, Bhat's vacant house and that of his brother was occupied by security forces. One day, an erstwhile neighbour from Shankarpora telephoned him to convey how the presence of a paramilitary camp in the midst of residential houses had caused inconvenience to them. Bhat rushed back to Kashmir, ran from pillar to the post, used his influence with whoever mattered in the government and got the buildings vacated. A couple of years later, he decided to end his 'exile'. The homecoming was celebrated by hosting a *wazwan* to which he invited his neighbours and friends. In his sixties now, Bhat has turned to spirituality. He is a believer in fate and God's control over it. He recalls hardship of living in wilderness of Janipora under an open sky where poisonous reptiles were frequent visitors, and God's mercy in the person of his Kashmiri Muslim friend who gave him keys to his house with a telephone facility in Jammu. He believes that the two communities in Kashmir have suffered alike and identifies some of his very rich Muslim acquaintances who too had to run away from Srinagar and live a broke life outside Kashmir. "If you are kind to people God will be kind to you," sums up his philosophy of life. Situated opposite to the temple in his compound, the local mosque's signpost *Jama Masjid Ahl-i-Hadith Salfia, Shankarpora* trashes allegations of Islamization

of names of places in Kashmir. Incidentally, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* or the *Salafist* are branded as hardcore Muslims, and Shankarpora was once considered a stronghold of militants.

Sita Ram Sokhal is another from umpteen positive stories that people outside Kashmir rarely get to know. Before leaving Srinagar at the height of militancy, Sokhals, the owners of famous Shakti Sweets at the Regal Chowk, handed over control of the shop to their employees who managed it for 25 years until 2015 when the family returned. The erstwhile employees were reluctant to part with the shop doing an annual business of about ₹25 crore. The local traders' association quickly swung into action and had the shop returned to Sokhals.<sup>40</sup> Sita Ram, whose ancestors had been brought to Kashmir by Pratap Singh, gratefully acknowledges the efforts by his "Muslim brothers" in getting back his family business. He believes that there never existed in Kashmir any bad blood between Muslims and non-Muslims, not even during the peak of militancy, and that attempts to "malign Kashmiri Muslims" for the exodus of non-Muslims from the Valley were unfortunate.

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3. Eraly, *The First Spring: The Golden Age of India*, 283. Eraly (1934–2015) was a Professor of History at the Madras Christian College, Chennai, who wrote a series of books on Indian history. He was also the founder of the *Aside*, a Chennai-based magazine.
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7. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 5.

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11. Ibid., Verse 306.
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18. Ibid., Verse 342–43; Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 7.
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# Glossary

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>aarti</i>           | Hindu worship in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) or camphor is offered to one or more deities; <i>aarti</i> also refers to the songs sung in praise of a deity |
| <i>agrahara</i>        | a quarter of a village inhabited by Brahmans   |
| <i>akhara</i>          | arena  |
| Allama                 | honorary title given to highest scholar  |
| <i>Amir-e-Kabir</i>    | great leader   |
| <i>anna</i>            | a coin, sixteen of which made a rupee  |
| <i>ashrafi</i>         | gold coin formerly used in Persia and India  |
| <i>auqaf</i>           | endowment  |
| <i>azadi</i>           | freedom  |
| <i>azan</i>            | call for prayers   |
| <i>badmash</i>         | urchin   |
| <i>Bakarwals</i>       | a tribe of nomadic goatherds and shepherds   |
| <i>begar</i>           | corvee or unpaid forced labour   |
| <i>bhatta</i>          | local name of Kashmiri Hindus  |
| Brihaspati             | Sun  |
| Brahman or Brahmin     | upper caste Hindu  |
| <i>chakdari</i> system | a government scheme prevalent during the Dogra rule under which uncultivated or waste land was allotted on easy terms  |

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| <i>charpoy</i>         | a traditional cot used in the Indian subcontinent  |
| <i>chinar</i>          | <i>Platanus orientalis</i> , grown abundantly in Kashmir   |
| <i>chowki</i>          | seat, a police <i>chowki</i> is a police post  |
| <i>chowkidar</i>       | a watchman or a gatekeeper   |
| <i>Daftar-i-Diwani</i> | office of the <i>Diwan</i> or minister   |
| <i>Darbar</i>          | royal court  |
| <i>devabhasha</i>      | divine language; Kalhana described Sanskrit as such  |
| <i>dhaba</i>           | eatery   |
| <i>Dharma</i>          | something established or firm, path of righteousness   |
| <i>dharamshala</i>     | a Hindu religious rest-house   |
| <i>dharmamatha</i>     | religious hospice  |
| <i>Dharmarth</i>       | Hindu endowment  |
| <i>Diwali</i>          | festival celebrated to commemorate Hindu god, Ram's return from 14-years of exile  |
| <i>dwaarpati</i>       | incharge of border areas   |
| <i>Eid</i>             | Muslim festival  |
| <i>fakir</i>           | mendicant  |
| <i>ghar waapsi</i>     | literally, meaning return to one's home; RSS is using the term to describe its programme of reconversion of non-Hindus who it alleges were forced to convert to Islam and Christianity in the past |
| <i>gotra</i>           | clan, descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor   |
| <i>Gujjars</i>         | a nomadic community of shepherds   |
| <i>guru</i>            | spiritual guide  |
| <i>haakim</i>          | ruler or officer   |
| <i>halaal</i>          | Islamic way of slaughtering animal for food by invoking Allah's name   |
| <i>Harkara</i>         | government agent for revenue collection  |
| <i>hartal</i>          | shutdown   |



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| <i>Hindutva</i>    | a term used for the right-wing Hinduism  |
| <i>Idgah</i>       | large ground where Eid prayers are offered   |
| <i>Imam</i>        | leader of Muslim congregational prayer   |
| <i>Iftaar</i>      | the evening meal eaten by Muslims at the sunset to break the daylong fast during the month of Ramadhan   |
| <i>jagir</i>       | land grant bestowed by a ruler   |
| <i>jagirdar</i>    | feudatory grantee  |
| <i>Janmashtami</i> | birthday of Hindu god, Sri Krishna   |
| <i>jazya</i>       | tax levied by Islamic State on adult, free and sane non-Muslim subjects in return of taking responsibility of their security; women, children, insane, elders, monks, hermits and slaves were exempted |
| <i>jhatka</i>      | Hindu way of slaughtering animal for food  |
| <i>kalima</i>      | oral declaration of entering into the fold of Islam  |
| <i>Kashmiriyat</i> | a term used to signify the age-old composite culture of Kashmir; the term gained currency after the mass migration of Kashmiri Pandit from Kashmir   |
| <i>kavya</i>       | verse  |
| <i>kawji</i>       | a Muslim who cremates bodies of Kashmiri Pandits   |
| <i>kayastha</i>    | official class   |
| <i>khanqah</i>     | hospice  |
| <i>kharwar</i>     | a donkey load  |
| <i>khatri</i>      | tradesman  |
| <i>khutba</i>      | mandatory sermon delivered by <i>Imam</i> on Friday or Eid prayers   |
| <i>kothas</i>      | humble dwellings of nomadic Gujjars  |
| <i>langar</i>      | community kitchen  |
| <i>lathi</i>       | baton  |
| <i>lathicharge</i> | baton charge   |

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| <i>lingam</i>                       | phallus or stalagmite  |
| <i>Lukikasamvat</i>                 | Kashmiri calendar in olden days  |
| <i>Madarulmiham</i>                 | a high ranking administrator equivalent to prime minister                                    |
| <i>madrasa</i>                      | school   |
| <i>mahant</i>                       | the chief priest of a temple   |
| <i>Mahaparinirvana of Tathagata</i> | Great nirvana of the Buddha  |
| <i>Maharaja</i>                     | king or ruler  |
| <i>mahatmya</i>                     | a guide book of a Hindu shrine   |
| <i>mahrah</i>                       | short form of maharaja   |
| <i>mandir</i>                       | temple   |
| <i>mashaal</i>                      | torch  |
| <i>matha</i>                        | monastery  |
| <i>mirwaiz</i>                      | chief cleric   |
| <i>mlecchas</i>                     | foreigners or impure, as Muslims were called by early Brahman chroniclers                    |
| <i>Mufti Azam</i>                   | Grand Mufti  |
| <i>mujahid</i>                      | a Muslim warrior   |
| <i>Mushaira</i>                     | poetic symposium   |
| <i>Naara-e-Takbeer</i>              | an Islamic slogan in response to which the crowd shouts <i>Allahu Akbar</i> (Allah is Great) |
| <i>Nanakshahi</i>                   | the ruling currency of the Sikh Empire   |
| <i>naga</i>                         | snake  |
| <i>naib-tehsildar</i>               | revenue official-in-charge of an administrative unit called <i>niabat</i>                    |
| <i>naqqar khana</i>                 | drum house or orchestra pit during ceremonies  |
| <i>Narayana</i>                     | Hindu god  |
| <i>nawab</i>                        | Muslim ruler of a princely state   |
| <i>nikah</i>                        | solemnization of Muslim marriage   |
| <i>Panda</i>                        | Brahman priest who maintains genealogy of Hindu families                                     |
| <i>pargana</i>                      | an administrative unit in old times  |
| <i>patwari</i>                      | village revenue official   |
| <i>pheran</i>                       | a loose gown worn by Kashmiris during winter   |

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| <i>prajapati</i>        | god   |
| <i>prasad</i>           | food offering made at a temple and later distributed among the devotees   |
| <i>prayopavesana</i>    | hunger strike   |
| <i>puja</i>             | prayer  |
| <i>pujari</i>           | priest  |
| <i>pundit or pandit</i> | scholar of Hindu scriptures   |
| <i>purohit</i>          | priest  |
| <i>Raj Bhawan</i>       | Governor's House  |
| <i>Raja</i>             | ruler   |
| <i>rakhi</i>            | ornamental wristband a Hindu girl or women on the festival of Raksha Bandhan ties on the wrist of her brother or a person that she regards as a brother                 |
| <i>rasm</i>             | custom, practice  |
| <i>Rasm-e-Patwari</i>   | a kind of bribe charged by a <i>Patwari</i>   |
| <i>rasoi</i>            | cuisine   |
| <i>Ravana</i>           | the 10-headed ruler of Lanka (present Sri Lanka) whom the Hindu epic Ramayana describes as the king of the <i>rakshasa</i> or demons                                    |
| <i>roti</i>             | bread   |
| <i>sadhu</i>            | mendicant   |
| <i>Sadr-i-Riyasat</i>   | under the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, the Head of the State was known as Sadr-i-Riyasat; in 1964, through an amendment, the nomenclature was changed to Governor |
| <i>sahibkar</i>         | a senior administrator  |
| <i>samadhi</i>          | memorial built upon a cremation site  |
| <i>Sangam</i>           | confluence of rivers  |
| <i>sargoal</i>          | a government agent for revenue collection   |
| <i>satyagraha</i>       | non-violent resistance  |
| <i>satyagrahis</i>      | persons who practise <i>satyagraha</i> or non-violent/civil resistance  |

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| <i>shahr ashob</i>  | lament of a city; it is an Urdu phrase to describe the grief felt for a city's fall or change in its ethos |
| <i>Shaivite</i>     | follower of Shiva  |
| <i>shakdar</i>      | an agent employed by the government to keep vigil on crops lest tillers take away few grains for their use |
| <i>shankh</i>       | conch  |
| Sharda or Sarda     | local script used in old days in Kashmir   |
| <i>Shariah</i>      | Islamic code   |
| <i>Shivala</i>      | Shiva's abode, a religious structure   |
| <i>Shiva lingam</i> | Shiva's stalagmite   |
| Shivratri           | religious festival celebrated by Kashmiri Hindus with fervour  |
| <i>shudi</i>        | reconversion to Hinduism   |
| <i>Subedar</i>      | chief of provincial administration   |
| <i>suttee</i>       | a Hindu funeral custom, now banned, where a widow immolated herself on her husband's pyre                  |
| <i>takht</i>        | throne   |
| takht-e-sulaiman    | Solomon's throne   |
| <i>tarakardar</i>   | a government agent for revenue collection  |
| <i>taranga</i>      | literally meaning wave; book in the contest of the <i>Rajatarangini</i>                                    |
| <i>tehsildar</i>    | revenue official-in-charge of an administrative unit called <i>tehsil</i>                                  |
| <i>tirtha</i>       | shrine   |
| Tonga               | horse-driven cart  |
| <i>tongawalla</i>   | horse-driven cart driver   |
| <i>Turuska</i>      | Turks or Muslims   |
| <i>Vais'navi</i>    | vegetarian Hindus  |
| <i>varna</i>        | characterization   |
| <i>vihar</i>        | a Buddhist monastery   |
| <i>vir</i>          | brave person   |
| Vishnu or Visnu     | Hindu god  |

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| Wazir                  | minister   |
| <i>wazir-i-wazarat</i> | chief administrator of a division  |
| <i>wazwan</i>          | a multi-course traditional Kashmiri cuisine served at weddings and special occasions                                     |
| <i>yaksa</i>           | nature spirit who is considered to be the custodians of treasures that are hidden in the earth and in the roots of trees |
| yatra                  | pilgrimage   |
| <i>yatri</i>           | pilgrim  |
| <i>zaildar</i>         | feudal title of revenue collector of an administrative unit called <i>zail</i> extending between two and forty villages  |
| zamindar               | owner of large tracts of land  |
| <i>zuhar</i>           | midday Muslim prayer   |

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# Index

4th World Buddhist Conference, 344

Aabideen, Zainul, 17, 40, 41, 50

Abbas, Chowdhary Ghulam, 141, 324

Abdali, Ahmad Shah, 70

Abdullah, Farooq, 296, 308, 328, 331, 354

Abdullah, Omar, 229, 290, 298, 354

Abdullah, Sheikh Mohammad, 54, 58, 103, 104, 117, 134, 144, 150, 153, 154, 296, 307, 320, 321, 324, 326, 328, 329

Abhinavgupta, 54

aborigines, concept of, 12

Achala, Achaladeva, 50

Advani, Lal Krishna, 258, 267

Afghanistan, 12, 60, 67

Afghans, 68-72, 96, 98, 269, 293

*Afiab*, 324

*agraharas*, 61, 344

Agriculture Department of Jammu and Kashmir Government, 226

*Ahl-i-Hadith*, 357

Ahmad, Ghulam, 329

Ahmad, Rashid, 335

Akbar, 65, 66, 97

annexation of Kashmir, 98

Alak Dat, 20

Alauddin, 40

*Alfaaz* newspaper, 101

Al-Faran, 248

Al-Fateh, 331

Aligarh Muslim University, 127

Ali, Mir Saiyid, 39

Ali, Mushtaq, 334

All India Gorkha League, 118

All India Handicrafts Board, 226

All India Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, 250

All India Majlis-i-Ahrar, 101

All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference, 153

All Parties Hurriyat Conference, 290

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (G), 330

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (M), 290

*Al-safa*, 242

*Amar, The*, 101, 301, 320

Amarnath yatra, 43, 291

*Amir-e-Kabir*, 39

*Anand Math*, 155

Ananta, 1

Anantnag, 12

Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46, 72

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), 3

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 137, 231, 269

Aryans, 6

Arya Samaj, 347

Ashai, Ghulam Ahmad, 108, 141, 324

*ashrafi*, 97

*Asia Watch Report*, 237, 251

Askar, Mirza, 98

*Asramasvami Mahatmya*, 2

Assembly Elections (1987), 325

- Aurangzeb, 60, 254  
 Australia, 12  
 Azad, Ghulam Nabi, 354  
 Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, 120  
 Azizuddin, Sheikh, 101  
  
 Babri Mosque demolition, 258  
 Babur, 96  
 Badam Bagh (Almond Garden), 106  
 Bahadur, Qara, 96  
*Baharistan-i-Shahi*, 35, 43, 45, 59  
*Bakarwals*, 140  
 Bali, Bikram Singh, 47, 53, 368  
 Bamzai, Kashi Nath, 156  
 Bandhu, Kashyap, 142, 150  
 Baweja, Harinder, 258, 333  
 Bayu, Sadasheo, 64  
 Bazaz, Prem Nath, 44, 141, 319, 324, 328  
 Begagund, 7  
 B. G. Verghese's Report on Kunan Poshpora, 333  
 Bhanda, Rupya, 65  
 Bhan, Jai Ram, 58  
 Bhan, J. L., 49  
 Bhan, Mona, 269  
 Bhan, Radha Krishen, 302  
 Bhan, Zairam, 69  
*Bharat Mata ki jai* (Victory be to Mother India) slogan, 155  
 Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), 228, 258, 259, 285, 288, 291  
     demand for separate settlements, 290  
 Bhasin, Anuradha, 232, 250  
 Bhasin, Ved, 287  
 Bhat, M. I., 5, 47, 53, 368  
 Bhat, Rahul, 255  
 Bhats family, 66  
 Bhatta, Jaya, 65  
 Bhatta, Karpur, 65  
 Bhatta, Rupya, 65  
*Bhattas*, 63  
 Bhatta, Sumitra, 65  
  
 Bhatta, Yodha, 65  
 Bhatt, Prajaya, 44  
 Bhatt, Shuk, 44  
 Bible, 26, 152, 343  
 Bilham, Roger, 47, 368  
 Bilhana, 55  
 Biscoe, Tyndale, 79, 81, 84  
 BJP-PDP coalition government, 289, 291, 306  
 Bombas of Muzaffarabad, 70  
 Brah, 7  
 Brahama, 49  
 Brahman of Mattan (a revered place for Kashmiri Pandits), 43  
*Brahma Purana*, 12  
*Brahm Hatya*, 348  
 Brihaspati, 39  
 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 270, 327  
 British Empire (Mother of Democracy), 75  
 Buddhism, 9, 344  
 Buddhist *viharas* in Kashmir, 61  
 Bukhari, Molvi Atta Ullah Shah, Bukhari, Parvez, 333  
 Bukhari, Sheikh Jalaluddin, 41  
 Burke, Jhon, 47  
 Burzahom, 4  
 Burzahom Neolithic, 8, 343  
     core aspects of, 8  
  
 Candrakulya river, 25  
 Central Asia, 12  
 Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), 249  
 Central Jail Srinagar, 95, 133  
 Chakbast, Brij Narayan, 55, 301  
*chakdari* system, 80  
 Chak, Kaji, 97  
 Chakravarty, Nikhil, 326  
 Chaks family, 66  
 Chak, Yusuf Shah, 97, 98  
 Chand, Mahashay Khushal, 130  
 Chatterji, Bankim Chander, 155



- Children's Book Trust, 26  
 China, 12, 344  
 Chinar, 50  
 Chowdhary, Rekha, 234, 244  
 Christian missionary, 75  
*Civil and Military Gazette*, 323  
*Collaborator and Book of Golden Leaves*,  
     *The* (Mirza Waheed), 268  
 Colvin, Colonel, 153  
 Colvin, E. J. D., 141  
 Committee for Initiative on Kashmir,  
     242  
 Constitution of India  
     Article 35A, 288  
     Article 370, 288  
*Country Without a Post Office, The*  
     (Agha Shahid Ali), 268  
 cremation tax, 35  
*Curfewed Night* (Basharat Peer), 268  
 Current News Service (CNS), 336  
 cyclostyle journalism, 327  
  
*Daftar-i-Diwani*, 84  
*daigchi* (cauldron), 130  
 Dalal, Barjor, 107  
 Dal Lake, 70  
 Damaras, 33, 35, 36  
*Damodara-Suda*, 24  
*darbar*, 72, 74  
 Dar, Bishen Narain, 72  
 Dardistan, 3  
 Dar, Kailas, 69  
 Das, Kishen, 310  
 Dass, Bhagwan, 97, 98  
*dasyu* (robbers), 35  
 Deccan College, Poona, 3, 4  
 Ded, Lal, 41  
*Desopadesa*, 63  
*devabhasha*, 38, 309  
*dharamshalas*, 146  
 Dhar, Birbal, 70, 71, 73, 74, 82  
 Dhar, Dwarka Nath, 156  
 Dhar family, 67  
 Dhar, Kailash Pandit, 69  
  
*dharm*, 11  
 Dhar, Mahanand Pandit, 69  
*dharmamatha*, 35  
*Dharmarth*, 71, 77, 146  
 Dharmarth Trust Fund, 77  
 Dhar, Raja Kak, 71, 82  
 Didda, 346  
*Did They Vanish in Thin Air?* (Zahir-  
     ud-Din), 268  
 Doghlat, Mirza Haider, 45, 96  
 Dogra regime, 75, 76  
     armed forces gunned down civilians,  
         320  
     Chief Justices appointment during,  
         306  
     forced labour during, 78  
     holding of periodic censuses, 294  
     soldiers gunned down unarmed  
         Muslims, 95  
     treatment to Muslims, 99  
 Doodhganga, 74  
 Doordarshan Srinagar, 229  
 Dulat, Amarjit Singh, 247, 296, 309  
*dwaarpati* (in-charge of border areas), 16  
  
 East India Company, 72, 304  
*Economic and Political Weekly*, 230  
 Eid-ul-Adha festival, 296  
*Elan Jaari Hai* (Ghulam Nabi Shahid),  
     268  
 ethnic cleansing, 251, 252, 266  
  
 Facebook, 336  
*fakir*, 136  
*Fateh Nama*, 72  
 Fauq, Munshi Muhammad Din, 319  
 Fayyaz, Ahmed Ali, 236  
 Fotedar, Makhana Lal, 307  
*Freedom Movement in Kashmir*  
     (Ghulam Hassan Khan), 102  
 Froster, George, 69  
  
 Gajalakshmi, 10  
*Gam Khaar* (Sympathiser), 65

- Gandhara, 10, 61, 344, 345  
 Gandhi, Indira, 157, 307, 327  
 Gandhi, Rajiv, 307, 328  
 Ganesha god, 35  
 Ganjoo, Shankar Nath, 145  
 Geelani, Syed Ali Shah, 290, 330  
 genocide, 133, 252, 255, 277, 346  
 Geological Society of America, 47  
 Ghai, Ved Kumari, 2, 12, 13, 19  
*ghar waapsi*, 347  
 Ghazni, Mehmood, 49  
*Ghost Town, The* (Shafi Ahmad), 268  
*Girdawar*, 87  
 Glancy, B. J., 140  
 Glancy Commission Report, 125, 140, 142, 144, 148–150, 152, 299  
 Global Meet of Pandits (2012), New Delhi, 285  
 Gofkral, 4, 7, 9  
 Gopaditya, 345, 346  
*gotras*, 162, 250, 288  
*Greater Kashmir*, 334  
 Greek, 9, 10, 12, 14  
*Guardian*, 335  
 Gulmarg, 4  
 guru, 43  
*Guru Ghantaal* newspaper, 101, 112, 132, 320  
  
 Habibullah, Wajahat, 240  
*Hakim-i-A'ala*, 80, 83  
 Haksar, Baboo, 307  
*Half Mother, The* (Shahnaz Bashir), 268  
*Half Widow, The* (Shafi Ahmad), 268  
 Hamdani, Mir Saiyid Ali, 39, 64  
 Hamdani, Mir Muhammad, 38, 39  
*Hamdard*, 324  
 Hangal, A. K., 55  
 Hariparigom, 7  
*harkara*, 82  
*hartal*, 136  
 Hazratbal, 146  
*Hemaal Nagrai*, 1, 5  
 Heyns, Christof, 270  
  
 Himalayas, 3  
 Hinduism, 9, 38, 348  
 Hindu Kashmir, 44, 286, 343, 349  
 Hindu Mahasabha, 323  
 Hindu Prabhandak Committee, 330  
 Hindu Press, 128, 320, 351  
     campaign against Muslims in Kashmir, 117  
     character assassination of Kashmiris, indulged by,  
     communal agitation by, 321  
     negative role on reporting of events in Kashmir, 120  
     raised hue and cry against Kashmir situation, 131  
     spreading rumours against Muslim leaders, 121  
 Hindu Rajya Sabha, 287  
 Hindu refugees, 231  
 Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), 248  
*Hindustan Times*, 326, 328, 330, 331, 335  
 Hindu Welfare Society of Kashmir, 267  
 Hizbul Mujahideen, 236  
 holocaust, 346  
 Holy Relic Movement (1963–64), 325  
 Hough, Susan, 47  
 Hun intrusion in Kashmir, 60  
 Hussain, Altaf, 335  
 Hussain, Zakir, 301  
  
 Ice Age, 3  
*Idgah*, 32, 138, 142  
*Imam*, 102  
 India, 12  
 Indian Administrative Service (IAS), 240  
*Indian Express*, 326, 335  
 Indian Hindus, 56, 265  
 Indian National Congress, 120, 154, 330  
*India Today*, 258, 259, 261, 329  
 Indo-Pakistani War of 1947, 156

- Inqilab* newspaper, 101, 121, 124, 129, 131, 320, 324  
 Intelligence Bureau (IB), 229, 307, 309  
 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad, 322  
 Islam, 9, 40, 48, 59, 60, 62–64, 85, 349  
     arrival in Kashmir, reasons for delay, 60  
     as Din-e-Insaniyat, 236  
     conversion of local population, 41  
     in Iran and Afghanistan, 60  
     in Kashmir, spread of, 36  
     Kashmiri Hindus, conversion process, 38  
 Islamia School, 86  
 Islamic State, 322  
 Irtihadul Muslimeen, 330  
*Itmadul Saltanat* (Trust of the Empire), 65  
  
 Jacob, Happymon, 308  
 Jagmohan,  
     *jagir*, 98  
     *jagirdar*, 70  
 Jahangir, 65  
*Jainatarangini*, 49  
*Jalodbhava* (water-born), 1, 26  
 Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque), 32, 41, 73, 112, 114, 136  
 Jamat-i-Islami party, 330  
 Jameel, Yusuf, 327, 329, 334, 335  
 Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, 246  
 Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, 355  
 Jammu and Kashmir Study Centre, 288  
 Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), 246, 290, 312  
 Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference, 154  
 Jamshed, 40  
 Janamashtami, 56  
 Jatakas, 5  
 Jayadevi-udar, 7  
 Jayaratha, 11  
 Jayasimha, 346  
*jayatu trsa*, 62  
*jayatu vrsadhvaja*, 62  
*jazyu* tax, 35  
 Jeevan, Sukh, 55, 69  
 Jhelum river, 355  
 Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, 312  
 Jivan, Sukh, 67  
 Jonaraja, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 59, 60, 65, 252  
*Jumat-ul-Vida* celebration, 138  
  
*kaar-i-sarkar*, 102  
 Kabul, 68–70  
 Kachroo, Birbal, 70  
 Kahmil, 256  
*Kaisri*, 121  
 Kak, Raja, 74  
 Kak, Ram Chandra, 299, 324  
 Kak, Sanjay, 269  
 Kalhana, 11, 55  
 Kalpa, 1  
 Kanishka, 344  
*Kaptesvara Mahatmya*, 2  
*Karam Vir*, 101  
 Kashani, Saiyid Mirak Shah, 137  
 Kashmir, 1, 3, 16  
     cultural aggression on, 12  
     earliest man living standard, 4  
     emergence of, 6  
     fourth pillar of Indian democracy, 319  
     Hindu society decay in, 63  
     Islamic practices in, 37  
     Mughal nobility in, 58  
     Muslims' presence in, origin of, 64  
     *Nagas*, 9  
     Persian histories of, 17  
     population of, 25  
     prehistoric man of, 4  
     transformation from Hindu kingdom to Muslim society, 34

*Kashmir:*

- The Vajpayee Years* (Amarjit Singh Dulat), 297
- Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS), 305
- Kashmir Amritsar*, 102
- Kashmir Centre for Social and Development Studies (KCSDS), 291
- Kashmir Day, 118
- Kashmiri
- folklore, 5
  - Hindus, 35, 38, 48, 55, 56
  - language, 12
- Kashmiri Brahmins, 32, 44, 55, 58, 59, 64
- change of surnames by Mughals, 67
  - eyes and ears of Mughal imperialism, 66
  - identify with Mughal system, 65
  - influence on Akbar, 65
  - royal patronage, 66
- Kashmiri Gandhi, 321
- Kashmiri Hindus, 36, 58, 102, 156, 254, 265, 284, 285, 313
- Kashmiri Mohalla, 72
- Kashmiri Muslims, 292, 314, 329, 332, 355
- blame on, 346
  - Plebiscite Movement by, 312
  - visit for business and higher education purpose, 227
- Kashmiri Overseas Association, 257
- Kashmiri Pandits, 10, 67–72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 132, 149, 152, 157, 239, 283, 292, 294, 309, 326, 330, 336, 341, 342, 347
- as *Battas*, 55
  - as The Fifth Columnists and The Instruments of Tyranny, 54
  - celebration of Hindu festivals, 56
  - difference in past recalled by, 349
  - emphasized descendants of Kashyapa or Nagas, 341
  - first militant attack on, 229
  - follow Brahmanism rules, 56
  - influence on State affairs, 58
  - insecurity among, 236
  - instruments of Afghans, 68
  - loyalty towards Afghans, 69
  - narratives of, 349
  - petition against cow slaughter, 74
  - role in Indian subcontinent politics, 54
  - separate homeland demand by, 285
  - Shaivite Hindus, 54
  - superior race, 57
  - theory of persecution, 285
  - urge to continue AFSPA, 270
  - use of Hindutva forces of India, 314
  - vilification campaign by, 353
- Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti, 247
- Kashmiri, Shoorish, 324
- Kashmiriyat*, 352
- Kashmir Life*, 264, 334
- Kashmir Monitor*, 334
- Kashmir Mussalman* newspaper, 101
- Kashmir* newspaper, 128
- Kashmir Reader*, 289, 334
- Kashmir Then and Now*, 124, 132
- Kashmir Through the Ages*, 124
- Kashmir Times*, 125
- Kasmira Mahatmya*, 2
- Katju, K. N., 311
- Katju, Mansa Ram, 310, 311
- Katju, Markanday, 310
- Kaul, Jayalal, 33
- Kautaliya, 115
- kavya*, 16, 27
- Khaleej Times*, 335
- Khan, Abdullah, 70
- Khan, Abdul Qadeer, 95, 103
- Khan, Abu Barkat, 67
- Khan, Ali Mardan, 67
- Khan, Atta Mohammad, 70
- Khan, Azim, 71, 126
- Khan, Ghulam Hassan, 102
- Khan, Islam, 254
- Khan, Karimdad, 70

- Khan, Mir Hazar, 69  
 Khan, Noor Din, 109  
 Khan, Nooruddin, 69, 70  
 Khanqah-i-Mualla (Glorious Hospice),  
     32, 41, 44, 85, 95, 99, 103, 104  
     blast at, 72  
 Khan, Shafaat Ahmad, 138  
 Kharoo, S. K., 145  
*Khatri* (Punjabi Hindu traders), 113  
 Khayal, Ghulam Nabi, 326  
*Khidmat*, 324  
 Khoihami, Hassan, 59, 126  
*Khulasat-ul-Tawareekh* (Mirza  
     Saifuddin), 71  
 Khushdil, Daya Ram, 55  
*khutba*, 102  
 Kilam, Jia Lal, 36, 58, 71, 101, 133,  
     142, 150, 154  
 King Abhimanyu II, 32  
 King Baldeva, 2  
 King Bikhshachara, 37  
 King Damodara II, 23  
 King Harsha, 32, 33, 36, 38  
 King Jahangir, 45  
 King Jayapida, 32  
 King Jayendra, 26  
 King Mihirakula, 11  
 King Mohammad Shah, 58  
 King Rajadeva, 32  
 King Samkaravarman, 32  
 King Sikandar, 34  
 King Vajraditya, 37  
 King Vibhishana, 26  
*Kitab-ul-Hind*, 22  
 Knight, E. F., 78, 83  
 Knowels, J. H., 67  
 Korea, 344  
 Kota Rani court, 38, 39  
*kothas*, 356  
 Kotru, M. L., 308  
 Koul, B. M., 156  
 Koul, Daya Kishen, 116  
 Koul, Ganesha, 65  
 Koul, Gopala, 65  
 Koul, Gwasha Lal, 71, 124, 126, 127,  
     132, 323  
 Koul, Hari Kishen, 85, 115, 116, 134,  
     135, 141  
 Koul, Hari Krishen, 299  
 Koul, K. L., 239  
 Koul, Lal, 71  
 Koul, Madho, 65  
 Koul, Nitasha, 269, 314, 337  
 Koul, Pandit Sada, 65  
 Koul, Tikki, 307  
 Koul, Tota, 87  
 Krishna god, 55  
 Ksemendra, 11, 37  
 Kshatriyas, 54  
 Kumar, Manoj, 292  
 Kumar, Raj, 55  
  
*Lahore Chronicle*, 101  
 Lahore Medical College, 145  
 Lal, Chuni (Diwan), 74  
 Laleshwari, 54  
 Lalitaditya, 36  
 Lal Krishna, Advani, 260  
 Land Reforms Act, 328  
 Lavanya, 37  
 Lawrence, Walter, 21, 56, 80, 303, 348  
 Levy, Aldrian, 248  
 Liddar Valley, 3  
 Line of Control, 311  
  
 Machiavelli, 115  
 Madan, Brij Krishen, 302  
*Madarulmiham*, 69, 127  
 Madhok, Balraj, 347  
 madrasa, 32  
 Magazine, Pradeep, 233  
 Magre, Rai, 50  
 Magres family, 66  
*Mahaparinirvana of Tathagata*, 61  
 Mahatma Gandhi, 155, 313  
*mahatmyas*, 62, 254, 343, 345  
 Mahayana, 344  
*Mainstream*, 326

- Majeed, Gulshan, 5  
*Majmoo-e-Tawarikh*, 70  
 Malhotra, Inder, 328  
 Malik, Mohammad Sayeed, 325, 328, 334  
 Malik, Mohammad Yasin, 290  
 Maliks family, 66  
 Malkhah, 142  
 Manakh, 20  
*Manu*, 1  
*Manvantara* (7th), 1  
 Maqbool, Majid, 337  
*Martand* newspaper, 300, 301, 303, 324  
 Martand temple, 50  
 Martial Law, 134  
 Masoodi, Mohammad Sayeed, 58, 324  
 mass rape, 333, 346  
*mathas* (monasteries), 34  
 meat  
     *halaal*, 55  
     *jharka*, 55  
 Media Education Research Centre (MERC), 334  
 Mehjoor, Ghulam Ahmad, 86  
 microphone wielding journalists, 333  
 Middleton, L., 138  
 migration of Kashmiri Pandits, 226, 249, 332, 346  
     forced, 234  
     Islamization of towns and historical places names, 254  
     post-migration letters to newspaper and friends, 243  
 migration of Kashmir Pandits, 319  
 Mihirakula or Mihiragula, 61  
 Mihirapura, 62, 344  
 Mihiresvara (shrine of Shiva), 344  
*Milad un Nabi*, 154  
 Milap, 101, 115, 117, 128, 130, 131, 320, 321, 323  
 Mir, Shamsuddin Shah, 38, 39  
*Mirwaiz* of Kashmir, 86, 103, 114, 229  
 Mishra, Pankaj, 333, 335  
 Misri, Dipti, 269  
*mlecchas*, 37, 38  
 Mochi Darwaza, Lahore, 118  
 Mohammad, Saiyid Ali bin Saiyid, 43  
 Mohi-ud-Din, Akhtar, 24, 27  
 Monistic Shaiva Philosophy of  
     Kasmira, 2  
 Moonje, Balakrishna Shivram, 118, 323  
 Moorcroft, William, 46, 73  
 Mufti, Mehbooba, 289, 354  
 Mughals, 66, 67, 96, 98, 269, 293  
     annexation of Kashmir, 96  
     left Kashmir from same route, 96  
     rule establishment in Kashmir, 65  
     snatched trade from Muslims, 67  
 Mukherji, B. K., 61  
 Mulgaonkar, S., 326  
 Multan, 37  
 Mungoo, Shabir Ahmad, 333  
 mushaira, 67  
*Mushir-ul-Mulk* (Advisor of the State), 65  
 Muslim Headmaster, 86  
 Muslim Kashmir, 44  
 Muslim *kawji*, 56  
 Muslim League, 313  
 Muslim separatism, 288  
 Muslim Sultanate, 37, 38, 40, 64, 350  
 Muslim United Front (MUF), 325, 330  
 Mustafa, Zia (alias Abdullah), 245  
 My Days in Prison (Iftikhar Gilani), 268  
 mythology, 12, 20, 25  
  
*Naar-e-Takbeer* slogan, 154, 155  
 Nadimarg massacre, 245, 246  
 Nadim, Dina Nath, 55  
*Nagas*, 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 26, 341, 343  
*Nagrai*, 1  
*naib-tehsildar*, 83

- naqqar khana*, 67  
 Narayana, 41  
*Narmamala*, 63  
 Naseem, Daya Shankar, 55  
 Nath, Amar, 72  
 Nath, Raja Narinder, 118  
 Nath, Sheetal, 149  
 National Conference, 290, 330  
 National Democratic Alliance (NDA), 297  
 Nationalist, 17  
 National Press, 328, 332  
 Nayyar, Kuldeep, 241  
 NDTV, 298  
 Nehru, B. K., 297, 307  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 21, 55, 153, 157  
 Niazi, Haibat Khan, 97  
*Nilamata Purana*, 1, 6, 7, 12, 16, 19, 23, 28, 49, 62, 341, 343, 345  
     composition of, 10  
 Nisar, Qazi, 331  
 Nooruddin, Sheikh, 41  
*Nusrat ul Islam*, 86  
  
 Oldham, R. D., 47  
 Olichibag, 7  
 Orientalist, 17  
*Oriental News Service*, 139  
*Our Moon Has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits*, 266  
  
 Pahalgam, 3, 4, 247, 261, 291  
*Paisa Akhbaar*, 101  
 Pakistan, 59  
 Pakistan administered Kashmir, 23, 99, 294  
 Pampur, 7  
 Pandit Agitation (1967), 325  
 Pandita, Ram Chand, 302  
 Pandit, Babu Ram, 70  
 Pandit, Ghulam Jeelani, 306  
 Pandit, Miru, 66  
 Pandit, Ranjit, 17, 21  
 Pandit, Soma, 65  
 Pandit, Sukha, 59  
 Pandit, Sushil, 133  
 Pandrethan temple, 48  
 Panikkar, K. M., 2  
*Panja-e-Faulad*, 101  
 Panun Kashmir, 250, 255, 284, 285, 287, 293, 307, 312  
     rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits, 293  
     resolution on *margdarshan* (guidance), 283  
 Panzogom, 7  
*Parihasapura*, 42  
 Parray, Muhammad Siddiq, 78  
 Parrikar, Manohar, 288  
 Partial Journalism—A Study of National Media of India and Kashmir Conflict (Danish Nabi Gadda), 333  
 Partition of India, 155  
 Parvati, 23  
*Patriot, The*, 325  
*patwari*, 73, 82, 87  
 PDP-BJP coalition Government, 291  
 People's League, 331  
 Pir Panjal range, 3, 5  
*Pisacas*, 2, 4, 8  
     identity of, 1  
 Plebiscite Front, 325  
 Polo, Marco, 38  
*prajapatis*, 20  
 Prasad, Ajhodia, 72  
*Pratap*, 101, 115, 117, 320  
*prayopavesana* (hunger strike), 34  
 Press Council of India, 333  
 Press Trust of India (PTI), 325  
 Prophet of Israel, 26  
 Public Safety Act (PSA), 231, 247, 332  
 Punjab Census Report, 79  
 Punjab Muslims, 118  
*Puranas*, 2, 5  
 Puri, Balraj, 241

- Qaidi Number 100* (Zamrooda Habib), 268  
*Qanoongo*, 87  
 Qasim, Syed Mir, 297, 308, 328  
 Queen Empress, 56  
 Qur'a'n, 26, 95, 102, 110, 154, 324  
 Qureshi, Mohammed Shafi, 328  
 Qutubuddin, 39, 40  
  
 Radio Kashmir, 124  
 Raghavan, G. S., 121  
 Raghuaacharya, Vijaya, 118, 323  
 Ragini Devi shrine, 355  
 Rai, Mridu, 81  
 Raina, Idi, 96  
 Rainas family, 66  
 Raja Dahir, 37  
*raja* or *nawab*, 119  
*Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, 1, 5, 7, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 28, 49, 254, 342  
     mythology impact on, 25  
 Rajput tribes, right on *Hemaal Nagrai*, 5  
 Rajya Sainik Board (State Soldiers' Board), 289  
 Rama god, 55  
 Ramayana, 23  
 Ram, Ganga, 85  
 Ram Janambhoomi liberation campaign in Ayodhya, 258  
 Ram, Moti, 56  
 Ram, Pandit Nand, 70  
 Ram, Sahaz, 126  
 Ram, Shiv, 129  
*Ranbir*, 319  
 Rashid, Abdur, 7  
 Rashtriya Seva Dal, 230  
 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), 195, 226, 286–289  
*Rasm-e-Patwari*, 73  
 Razdan, Krishen Joo, 55  
 Reading, Lord (Viceroy of India), 85  
 Rebellion of 1857, 72  
 Report on Kashmir, 233  
  
 Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), 230  
 Reuters, 335  
 Riots Enquiry Committee of 1931, 124, 127  
 rishis, 33, 34  
*Rising Kashmir*, 334  
*riyakaar* (a hypocrite), 124  
 Roman, 12  
*Roshni*, 324  
 Roti (Bread) Agitation of 1932, 87, 150  
  
*Sadaqat* newspaper, 101  
 Sadiq, G. M., 328  
 Sadr-i-Riyasat, 307  
*sahibkar*, 68  
 Saif-ud-Din, Malik, 43  
*Saiva*, 63  
     gurus, 63  
*S'aivism*, 62, 344  
*saiyyads* (Muslim preachers), 41, 64  
*Salafist*, 357  
 Salahuddin, Syed, 331  
 Samkaravarman, 18, 25  
 Sanatan Dharma Youngmen's Association, 151  
 Sangrampora massacre, 245  
 Sanskrit, as *devabhasha* or divine language, 18  
 Sapru, Tej Bahadur, 55  
 Saraf, Mohammad Yusuf, 78  
 Saraf, Mulk Raj, 319  
*sargoal*, 82  
 Sarshar, Ratan Nath, 55  
 sati practice, 56  
 Satisar, 1  
 Sayeed, Mufti Muhammad, 289  
 Scott-Clark, Cathy, 248  
 Sender, Henny, 70, 349  
*Shabistan*, 297  
 Shah, Ghulam Mohammad, 307  
 Shah, Hussain, 65  
*Shah-i-Hamdan*, 39  
 Shah Jahan, 65



- Shah Mir Dynasty, 31, 39, 293  
 Shah Mirs family, 64, 293  
 Shah, Molvi Rasool, 86  
 Shah, Peer Ghulam Hassan, 306  
*shahr ashobs*, 73  
 Shah, Saiyid Abdur Rehman Bulbul, 60  
 Shah, Shabir, 298  
 Shaiva, 23  
*Shaivism*, 11, 18, 62, 341, 344, 345  
     impact of, 62  
     pounders of, 63  
*Shaivite*  
     Brahmans, 11, 345  
     Hinduism in Kashmir, 62  
*shakdar*, 82  
 Shamsuddin, Khwaja, 40  
 Shankaracharya (Takht-e-Sulaiman), 142  
 Sharda script, 35, 49  
 Sharfuddin, Syed (Bulbul Shah), 38  
*Shariah*, 31, 40  
 Sharma, Baldev Prashad, 125  
 Sharma, Lok Nath, 141  
 Shauq, Shafi, 6  
 Sheetal Nath shrine, 150  
*Sher-Bakra* fights, 157  
 Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, 255  
 Sheshnag god, 12  
 Shiromani Akali Dal, 322  
 Shiva, 2, 25  
 Shiva emblem, 43  
*shivalas*, 146  
 Shivratri festival, 62  
 Shiv Sena, 226  
 Shopian, 4  
 Shourie, Arun, 328  
 Shudras, 54  
 Shuhabuddin, 40  
*Siasat* newspaper, 101  
 Sikh army, 71  
 Simhadeva, 63  
 Simnani, Syed Hussain, 38  
 Sind, 37  
 Singh, Gulab, 71, 75, 76, 82  
 Singh, Hari, 75, 78, 95, 107, 122, 138, 139, 140, 142, 149  
 Singh, Khushwant, 126  
 Singh, Maharaja Ranbir, 347  
 Singh, Nirmal, 336  
 Singh, Pratap, 142, 319  
 Singh, Raja Maharaj, 75  
 Singh, Raja Man, 97  
 Singh, Rajnath, 286  
 Singh, Ranbir (Maharaja), 80  
 Singh, Ranjit, 71, 72, 74  
 Sinha, S. K., 291  
*sly sadhus*, 61  
 Sodhi, Ashok, 336  
 Sombur, 7  
 Soviet Union, 156  
 Soz, Saifuddin, 331, 354  
*Srikanth Charit*, 20  
 Sri Krishna god, 23, 25  
 Sri Lanka, 344  
*Srinagar Times*, 324  
 Sri Pratap Library, 145  
 Sri Pratap Museum, 145  
 Srivara, 28, 39, 44, 49, 65  
 State Administrative Council (SAC), 305  
 State Amity Council, 332  
*Statesman*, 323, 328, 332  
 Stein, Aurel, 344  
 Stein, M. A., 17, 348  
 strikes by Kashmiris, 333  
*subedar*, 56, 66, 67  
 Suhabhatta (Prime Minister), 35, 64  
 Sultan Sikandar, 28, 31, 33, 59, 347, 354  
     association with Mir Muhammad Hamdani, 40  
     bias against, 50  
     iconoclasm, 43  
     Jonaraja's dislike for, 41  
     object of hatred and bias of chroniclers, 42  
     temple destruction by, 42  
     vilification of, 49

- SUNDAY magazine, 329  
 Sureshwar temple, 50  
*Suttee*, 48  
 Swami, Subramaniam, 288  
 Swamy Dayanand Saraswati, 347
- Taghai, Ali, 96  
 Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 301  
 Tajuddin, Syed, 38  
 Takht-e-Sulaiman (Shankaracharya hill), 49  
 Takshakh Nag god, 12  
*Taqat* newspaper, 116  
*tarakardar*, 82  
*tarangas*, 19  
 Tarkunde, V. M., 233  
*tehsildar*, 77, 83  
*Telegraph*, 325  
 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA), 247  
 Thajiwor, 7  
 Thorp, Robert, 100  
 Tickoo, Sanjay, 245  
 Tikoo, Manohar Nath, 233  
 Tikoo, Sanjay, 245, 255  
 Tiku, Pandit Nand Ram, 68  
*Times of India*, 229, 335  
*tirtha*, 1, 2, 23, 33, 254  
*Travels in India and Kashmir*, 77  
 Treaty of Amritsar, 99, 132  
*Tribune*, 101, 115, 121, 320, 323  
 Trissal, O. N., 232  
 Tsiang, Hiuen, 61, 344  
*Turuska*, 33  
*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, 45  
 Twitter, 336  
 Two Nation Theory, 312
- Ummat-i-Islami, 330  
 UNESCO conference on *Homo sapiens*, Paris, 3  
 United Nations Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), 230
- United News of India (UNI), 325  
 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 256  
 University of Colorado, US, 47  
 University of Kashmir, 47, 334  
*Until My Freedom Has Come and Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (Sanjay Kak and Fahad Shah), 268  
 US Geological Survey, 47
- Vaishyas, 54  
*Vais'navi Brahmanism*, 62  
 Vakil, Qamaruddin (Pir), 106  
*Vanday Matram*, 154  
 Vasukh Nag god, 12  
 Vedic India, 12, 312  
 vernacular press emergence in Kashmir, 325  
 vice, 33  
 Vijabror (Bijbihara), 10  
 Vijay, Tarun, 288, 289  
 Vijeshwara (Bijbehara), 344  
 Vijeshwari temple, 50  
 virtue, 33  
 Vishnu/Visnu, 1, 2, 11, 25, 33, 54  
*Vitasta Mahatmya*, 2  
*Vitasta* newspaper, 319  
 Vohra, Narinder Nath, 298
- Wakefield, G. E. C., 115  
 Wanchoo, H. N., 238  
 Wandhama massacre, 245  
 Wani, Burhan, 333, 336, 337  
 Wani, Mohammad Ashraf, 64  
 Watal, P. K., 115  
*wazir-i-wazarat*, 83  
 Waztal, 7  
*wazwan*, 356  
*Weekly Amar*, 100  
 White Huns, 61  
*White Man in Dark* (Rumana Makhdoomi), 268

- Yangtze river, 4  
yojanas, 1  
Young Men's Muslim Association  
    Jammu, 103  
Yuvak Sabha, 130, 141, 226  
  
Zahir-ud-din, 237  
*zaildar*, 139  
*Zamindar* newspaper, 101  
  
zamindars, 75  
Zaram Sattam, 56  
Zargar, Abdul Majid, 133  
Ziauddin, Mufti, 141  
Zionist Israeli regime, 313  
Zojila, 96  
*zuhar* prayer, 105  
Zutshi, Chitralekha, 17

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The advent of Islam in medieval Kashmir gave birth to a narrative that describes forcible mass conversion of Hindus, eviction of aborigines and wanton demolition of religious symbols. A minority of Kashmiri Brahmins and their progeny who did not convert to Islam built and successfully perpetuated this narrative over the centuries. In the course of time, new elements were added to it. Following the eruption of armed insurgency in Kashmir and mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, this community narrative has turned into the Indian mainstream view on Kashmiri Pandits.

*Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative* challenges the existing narrative through historical facts and cross-referencing. It exposes many fallacies used to uphold this narrative and dissects the work of historians that has sustained ahistorical perceptions over a long period of time. The book links history to the present and facilitates an understanding of the situation today.



**KHALID BASHIR AHMAD** is a former Civil Servant from the Kashmir Administrative Services.

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